

It's good to be with you all this morning. For those of you who are new here, as Pastor Rick mentioned my name is Andrew. I get the incredible privilege of serving as one of the Pastor's here. In addition to being a Pastor, I am the lucky, lucky husband of Kristen and father of Ya'el, and this coming June, we'll have an addition to the family as we are expecting baby Kraye-White #2. So we're super excited about that. Much like we did with Ya'el we are going to wait to find out whether it's a boy or girl until its born. Because we don't think there are going to be enough surprises with having a second child.

As many of you with multiple children know, the 2nd pregnancy, it's just different from the first. When my wife was pregnant with Ya'el we had an App on our phone that we were glued to, it would tell us about the baby's development – like it's the size of a blueberry, or a peach, or an eggplant. And every week, we looked forward to the day, when the App would update and tell us new things about our baby. Now, I don't mean to say we're not excited about baby #2, but we don't really have time for that with a two-year-old running around.

For the first pregnancy I went with Kristen to all of her appointments...we tried doing that for the first two appointments this time, and realized, that go figure - Ya'el likes to sit in waiting rooms, even less than we do. So, now I'm home with our daughter for them. It's different.

Because we're waiting on finding out if it's a boy or girl, we have to come up with two different sets of names. Ya'el is a biblical name, so we're kind of leaning in that direction. The nice thing is that when you're looking in the bible for names ideas, there are a lot of names to choose from. Some of them are cool because they are unique – like Zerubbabel. Did anyone grow up with a Zerubbabel in class? Certainly not a case of two Zerubbabel's where the teacher would mix them up. Others are cool because of their meaning, like Areli, which means "lion of God" or I don't even know how to pronounce this: "Elieoai" which means "my eyes look to God."

Other times, you kind of wonder, what were there parents thinking? Huldah was a female prophet whose name means weasel or mole. Why would you name your daughter that? The name Jacob means deceiver. Or at least that's what it's come to mean. It's one of those chicken and egg kind of things – did Jacob mean deceiver before they named him that, or as a result of his actions did his name become so synonymous with the action of deceiving that the noun, the name Jacob, became a verb – it became an action to Jacob someone?

We're wrapping up this sermons series "Zip it" this week, and I thought, what better place to go to look at the issue of lying than looking at the life of Jacob, the deceiver.

Would you turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Genesis, chapter twenty-seven? As we turn there, I want to provide some of the background for those who might be less familiar with this story. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins with the story of creation. It tells us that God created the world good, very good in fact. In Genesis chapter three we have what we call the Fall, the story of the first couple committing the first sin, and then in chapters three through eleven we see the compounding impact of humanities sinfulness and the progression of away from God's intention. In chapter twelve, God calls a man named Abram, later renamed Abraham. And God said to him ***"Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who***

bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

God's solution to the brokenness in this world was not to get us to try harder, not raising the bar on his expectations, but his solution to our sinfulness is blessing us. Somehow that blessing was going to come through this family.

Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless, but in their old age, they had a son named Isaac who was known, as the son of the promise. Isaac married a woman named Rebecca, and eventually, she gave birth to twin sons named Esau and Jacob. They were fraternal twins, not identical twins. They really couldn't have been more different. Esau, the older son, was hairy, it's kind of a weird detail to give, but it turns out to be important. We'll see that in a moment. He was a hunter and outdoorsman while Jacob, the younger son, was known to dwell in among the tents. Another helpful detail the text tells us is that ***Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*** I don't know what Rebecca's deal was, but it doesn't sound like Isaac didn't love Esau, Isaac loved him some BBQ.

Anyway, that essentially brings us to our text in chapter twenty-seven. ***"When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. 3 Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. 4 Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."***

There's Isaac, thinking with his stomach. Seriously, Isaac wasn't making a trade with Esau the way that his brother Jacob does earlier in Genesis. Isaac was about to pass on the blessing that he received from his Father Abraham. This was the blessing that Abraham was promised by God when he first called him. And this was an action so significant, that Isaac believed that it was going to take all of his strength to do it, so he requests that Esau prepare him a meal first.

The problem here is that Isaac's wife Rebecca was listening in. She heard all that Isaac had told Esau, and she came up with a plan of her own. ***Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: 9 Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."***

To which Jacob responds, "Mom, I can't believe you would suggest such an underhanded and dishonest action. This is my Dad and brother we're talking about. I could never do that to them." Wait no, Jacob objects, but his objection is one of practicality not one of principle. He said ***"But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. 12 What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing."*** He apparently has no issue with lying; his issue is with getting caught.

Before we plow further into this story, it's worth asking the question, why is Rebecca suggesting this? Beyond her evident love for her son and desire to see that he's blessed. Why is she advocating such a patently dishonest agenda at the cost of another son? What some people argue is that Rebecca was actually trying to pursue God's will. You see when Rebecca

was pregnant with Jacob and Esau she received a word from the Lord saying ***“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”*** In coaching Jacob to deceive his father, and receive his brother’s the blessing for himself, she simply helping God to fulfill his promise. Or so some suggest.

The problem with that understanding is that our God isn't really an end justify the means kind of God. That's not who He is. What Rebecca is advocating and what Jacob does is lying. And lying is a sin. I know in our culture we don't think lying is a big deal. But it is a big deal for God. Proverbs 12:22 says ***“The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.”*** We looked at this passage two weeks ago from Proverbs 6, when we were looking at gossip. We said God hates gossip. Well, guess what else God hates? **A lying tongue.** Apparently, God hates lying so much that it's listed twice in chapter six, in verse seventeen and again in verse nineteen. Whether it's the little white lie you tell, or your stealing your brother's blessing...lying is a sin and as such, separates us from God. The wages, of sin, Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 6:23 is death.

I was thinking about the underlying reason this week for why I lie, for why we lie. And I think it's because we have a **control issue**. The reason that we lie is that we think by lying, we can better control the situation than telling the truth would. If I tell the truth in a given situation, I'm uncertain of what the outcome may be. However, if I lie, I can control the outcome. Or so we think.

When we're running around the house trying to get one more thing done before we go out to dinner with friends. And we show up fifteen minutes late, and we lie and say “man, the traffic was terrible.” We're trying to control what other people think about us. We're trying to convince them that our lateness isn't that we're irresponsible, that we didn't plan ahead. It doesn't mean that we think our time is more valuable than theirs; it was just traffic. We lie to control **how people think about us**. This is where those little white-lies, come in. We twist the truth just a little bit, just enough to make us look a little bit better or make our achievements seem a little more impressive, or even just make a story more dramatic or entertaining.

What about “when the boss asks how a certain project that you haven't started is going, and you say, "great. I mean I'm killing it. I should have it for you any day now.” You're trying to control your boss' response. Because at that moment we're afraid of what he would do or say if we told the truth. **We try and control how people respond to us.**

When a friend asks to help them move or for a ride to the airport, and you don't want to do it – **you lie as to control the situation for your convenience or advantage**. I'd love to but I have to take my mother-in-law to the Doctor that day. This is what Rebecca and Jacob were doing in Genesis twenty-seven. They were lying as a means of control – to get Jacob the blessing, lying to control the situation for Jacobs advantage.

I mentioned that some people think that Rebecca was entirely in the right in trying to secure the blessing for Jacob and fulfilling God's words. But really what that shows us is that Rebecca didn't just have a control issue. She had a trust issue. She didn't trust that God could handle blessing Jacob, apart from a little help. The way she saw it was that if Esau came back with a meal for his Father, and then Isaac laid his hand on Esau and blessed him, then God's words would not come true for Jacob. She didn't trust that God could handle it apart from a little help.

It's no different for us; our control issue reveals an even deeper **trust issue**. When we lie in interviews, stretching the truth of our accomplishments, we do it because we don't trust that God's got things in control on his own. We lie to make a sale or close a deal because deep down we don't entirely trust God to provide for us apart from a little help we pitch in.

The irony in all of this is that to sell a lie you've first got to buy a lie. We have to believe one before we tell one. And the first lie we buy and fall for every time we lie is that we can control the consequences better by lying by telling the truth or simply allowing things to play out. In Genesis twenty-seven, when Jacob said essentially, "if Dad figures out I tricked him, I'll be cursed," Rebecca responded "**My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say.**" Rebecca bought the lie that she could control the fall out if Jacob got caught. But she could not imagine what the fallout was going to be.

For those of you unfamiliar with the story – Jacob went through with the lie. He convinced his blind father that he was his hairy brother Esau and he received the blessing. When his brother found out what he had done, he plotted to kill Jacob and made it no secret he was going to do so. Jacob fled...and Rebecca never saw the son whom she loved again. Did Rebecca see that coming? Could she control that result? No way. My bet is Rebecca would have traded that blessing any day in order to have her son back living among them.

Jacob paid the price too. At the end of his life looking back, Jacob concluded "***The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.***" The meaning of Jacob, along with deceiving is heel-grasping. It comes from the fact that when Esau was born, Jacob was grasping his heel. I wonder how much different Jacob's life would have been had he not grasped for the blessing, but simply trusted that what God says he'll do, he'll do, and open-handedly received the blessing in God's time.

The fallout for sin was everywhere in the family. Isaac must have been heart-broken having been deceived and manipulated by his own son. Esau was burned by his own brother and robbed of the blessing that should have been his. It even goes to the next generation who weren't even born yet. Jacob eventually has twelve kids, like his mom and dad, he'll choose a favorite, and his favoritism gets to the brothers. They take the favored brother Joseph, sell him into slavery and then they lie to Jacob telling him Joseph was mauled and killed by a wild animal. I know I'm taking a huge chunk of scripture and boiling it down to make a point. But Jacob's habit of lying is passed down to his kids, and they learned the lesson all too well. This week in Life Groups we're going to look at a lie that Abraham, Jacob's grandfather told, the same lie his son told Isaac told, and as we've spent all evening talking, it was passed to Jacob.

The generational nature of sin is what makes the second lie buy so egregious. Not only do we believe we can control the consequences, but we also buy the lie **a little lie isn't going to hurt anyone**. The truth is even little-lies, I would say particularly little lies, told, again and again, shape our character, and it's our character that we pass on to those after us. We have no idea who's watching or who will be impacted by our little lies.

So how do we change? How do we flip the script from lying to becoming truth-tellers? I don't know if there is a more truthful form of speech than confession. In confession we are simply admitting what is true about us, admitting to God what he already knows to be true. We confess to God our brokenness our desire to control, our failure to trust. We confess God; this is who I am. And God will respond with something else that is true about us. That we are

forgiven. That he is making us new. I want to invite you to confess this to God this week, but confess it in your life groups, around the dinner table, with those that you do life with. If lying is something you really struggle with, let's fight back by being honest about it. Let's begin a new habit of speaking truth by confessing to those people and speak the truth in the open.

And the people in your life can speak the truth back to you, encourage you that you are forgiven, and as a forgiven child of God, you have taken off the old self as our memory verse tells us to put on the new self...you are being remade in the image of our creator

As we close, I want to circle back to Jacob's story. Jacob blows it; there's no doubt about it. But that doesn't disqualify him. That doesn't preclude him from being used in God's plan of redemption for the world. Warts and all, Jacob gets to carry the blessing. I pray that this story is a double encouragement. Don't do what Jacob did. But for those of us who struggle and struggle and struggle. God can use you; he can still bless you and others through you. Let's pray to that end.