

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2025
SERMON SERIES PART 5: BACK TO THE BASICS
SERMON: WHERE IS GOD?
SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 25:19-34
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GENESIS 25:19-34

19 This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram^[a] and sister of Laban the Aramean.

21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

23 The LORD said to her,

"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."

24 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. 25 The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.^[a] 26 After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.^[a] Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.^[a])

31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

32 "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and

left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Sermon: Where Is God?

Welcome to Week 5 of our Sermon Series, “Back to the Basics: A Journey Through Genesis.” Today we’re covering the story of Jacob and Esau, which is a thematic continuation of humankind doing nasty and rude things to each other and trying to navigate where God is in the middle of our self-inflicted chaos.

Well, maybe the characters from Genesis *aren’t* actually wondering where God is. More often, they actually seem to be actively trying to hide from Him or bold-faced denying His commands. The question of “where is God” does, however, come to mind for me when I read this story of Jacob stealing Esau’s birthright. In earlier stories we’ve read like Adam and Eve or Abraham and Isaac, *God* comes looking for *them*. Yet, in the story of Jacob, He seems to be a footnote if mentioned at all.

He’s briefly mentioned in verse 23 when he tells Rebekah that the twins in her womb will be warring nations. He’s not giving her advice or prescribing a command on how she should deal with it; He’s only naming what it is, and then He essentially ducks out and doesn’t show up for another two chapters, and even then it’s not direct contact but Isaac invoking His name while accidentally blessing Jacob while he tricked his father into thinking he was Esau. God doesn’t really show up in any authoritative sense again until chapter 28 when He affirms to Jacob his calling and anointing as Chosen in a dream known as “Jacob’s Ladder” – which we the reader may grumble and read, thinking, “now, why does he deserve that honor after all that treachery against his own brother?!”

Last week we talked a little bit about forgiving God when it seems like God’s unfairly punishing us with suffering. This week, we’re talking about when it feels like God is not there, which is a feeling many of us have faced.

I get this question a lot as a pastor – about how to speak to God when you can’t hear Him answer you.

My seminary education forced me to think about these things through the classes and experiences it offered not only so I could talk with integrity about them to people in real life pastoral situations, but also because it’s biblical. A lot of the Bible doesn’t come with neat, tailored explanations for God’s actions, or how He selects people to be chosen, or where He is when bad things happen. Jacob, like Noah the drunk or Abraham the near child murderer or Adam the blamer, is not a person you would think of as holy, upright, or worthy of God’s affirmation of covenant. Jacob is sort of a rascal, Jacob doesn’t seek out God’s guidance at all, Jacob is overall really sort of a twerp.

It feels like in many chapters of Jacob’s story that God has some serious explaining to do, yet, He’s nowhere to be found.

If Boston University School of Theology – where I obtained my theology degree – was good at anything, it was breaking down the easy explanations of faith and making us really *think* about these issues that Genesis brings up: such as God’s silence in injustice, or forgiving God when He sends us more than we can handle, or when we can’t hear Him speaking to us no matter how desperately we ask for direction, or when the mischievous twerp we know seems to get all the blessings without even asking for them while we faithfully beg and plead for divine direction.

There’s a book that I read in one of my preaching classes called *When God is Silent* by Barbara Brown Taylor. In the book, she suggests that silence is not the same thing as absence. Just because God isn’t shouting directions or cutting in to stop Jacob’s deceit doesn’t mean God has abandoned the scene. According to Taylor, silence can be its own form of presence. It leaves space for us to wrestle, to reflect, and sometimes to see more clearly who we are and what we’re doing.

Taylor says that preachers—and really, all of us who claim faith—are tempted to fill every silence with our own words, our own explanations. But silence, especially God’s silence, invites us to pause and listen differently. In the Jacob story, the silence is uncomfortable. Jacob schemes. Esau rages. Isaac falters. Rebekah manipulates. And God is not rushing in to control any of it.

But notice this: when God finally does appear to Jacob in chapter 28, it isn’t to scold him or undo the past. Instead, God reaffirms the covenant. It almost feels unfair—why reward a trickster? And yet, this is the mystery of God’s silence. God has allowed the mess to play out, not because He doesn’t care, but because He can take even our deepest flaws—our selfishness, our rivalry, our broken family systems—and turn them toward His larger purposes.

This is a pivotal moment in Genesis because it marks a shift: we are moving toward the end of “the beginning.” Creation, fall, flood, scattering, promises, betrayals, blessings—all the chaos of human life has been laid out. And through it all, God does not control what we do. He gives us freedom, even the freedom to hurt one another. But the story insists that God can still make beauty out of everything, even our worst actions.

That is good news for us. Because we all have Jacob moments. We all have Esau moments. We all carry the scars of family pain, personal betrayal, selfish ambition. And sometimes, God feels silent in the midst of it. But silence is not absence. Silence is the space where God is still at work—patiently, mysteriously, weaving redemption through threads we can’t yet see.

So when you find yourself asking, “Where is God?”—maybe in your prayers, maybe in your grief, maybe in the chaos of your own family or community—remember this story. God may not always speak on demand. But He is not absent. And if He can make a covenant people out of Jacob the deceiver and Esau the wounded, He can make something beautiful out of us, too.

Amen.