

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #1, Goldingay pages 1-6

Highs and Lows

Gen. 17:1-6

1. The covenant is made with Abraham, despite the fact that he is not sinless and his offspring might mess things up. Who were some of the kings that came from the line of Abraham? Were they all good leaders?

2. The author explains two of the names used for God that are used in his translation of the Hebrew text. *YHWH* (Yahweh) is a proper noun name for God, and *El Shadday* is often translated as “God Almighty.” Another name for God used in Hebrew is *Elohiym*, which is a plural word, signifying God along with all the angels of heaven. What does this word for God mean to you? What might it have meant to Abraham?

3. Why might someone changing their name be important?

Gen. 17:7-8

1. God explains that God wants to be the God of the many nations from Abraham's lineage. As the offspring multiply, God wants to remain in the hearts and minds of Abraham's descendants. Why might this be important?
2. The author explains that Abraham's status as an alien where they were living meant that he was an outsider to the land. Abraham's offspring are receiving the land of Canaan in which to dwell. What is important about an outsider receiving a place to make their home?
3. On page 5, the author explains that Christians can be an alien to our modern world, because the world does not operate as Christ does and it might be worrying if a Christian starts to feel *too* at home in the world. How do you feel as a part of the world, and how do you feel *apart from* the world?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of our past and our future, you revealed yourself to Abraham and generations have followed you. Lead us now in the direction of your will and change us to better serve you. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #2, Goldingay pages 6-13

Highs and Lows

Gen. 17:9-14

1. One aspect of baptism is that it is a sign of our covenant with God. Martin Luther said that “to be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God.” What does baptism mean to you?

2. God tells Abraham that one way Abraham and his descendants will show that they are keeping, or “guarding” as the author translates, the covenant is by circumcision. Thinking about this, it might seem like a very odd thing for God to ask Abraham to do. How might circumcision show that the family of Abraham is serious about keeping God’s covenant?

3. What do you think about people who refuse to accept the sign of the covenant with God being cut off, as the author puts it, from the family of the covenant? Do you think things changed with the death and resurrection of Christ?

Gen. 17:15-19

1. Here we have another name change commanded by God. The author explains why this name change is important. Why do you think this name change was necessary? What about her importance to the Abrahamic lineage and her change of status?

2. Ishmael was Abraham's first son, who was born from the family servant Hagar, not from Sarah. Why might have God continued the covenant with Isaac instead of the first-born son Ishmael? What do you think happens to Ishmael? (Or, if you know that part of the story...)

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of unimaginable grace, you show your love to us and continue to keep your covenant with us. We thank you for baptism, and we thank you that through the water and the word, you allow the old self to die for us to be renewed and reborn. Remain our guide as we learn and grow. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #3, Goldingay pages 13-16

Highs and Lows

Gen. 17: 20-27

1. As the narrative continues in Genesis, Isaac is declared to be the next in line from Abraham, but God still loves Ishmael. Ishmael receives the covenant sign despite it being Isaac that was God's chosen. What could be the reasons that God did this?

2. The author notes that Abraham "knows total commitment is necessary, and he sees total obedience happen" when it comes to the circumcision of every male in Abraham's household. Abraham followed the directions of God and he made sure there were "no mistakes and no exceptions." Do you think Christ tasks Christians in a similar way, or is this a different situation?

3. The Hebrew translation at the beginning of this section stressed that everyone, including the people that Abraham "had bought with money" were considered part of the "household" of Abraham. They were not born into the house, but they were now part of the house. What could this say about the nature of how God makes "outsiders" part of God's household?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of unimaginable love, you brought humanity together through Christ. We were all outsiders, and because of your Son, we are not just part of the family, but we are unified as one body. Remain our guide as we learn and grow. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #4, Goldingay pages 16-23

Highs and Lows

Gen. 18: 1-15

1. Abraham and Sarah respond differently to the visitors that were sent by God. Abraham sets up refreshing hospitality for the messengers, but Sarah hears what they come to tell them and laughs (which isn't necessarily a "bad" reaction either). What could this tell us about where Abraham and Sarah are on their own faith journeys? How can you relate to Sarah's skepticism?

2. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, God comes to people in the form of a burning bush, a voice in the middle of absolute silence, and through incredible visions. There is no indication that the three visitors in this passage looked anything different than three ordinary men. Why do you think Abraham reacted to them as he did?

3. Many modern Bible translations have explained that these three visitors are angels. How have you come to understand angels?

Gen. 18: 16-20

1. We can rest assured that God always hears all the cries of God's children, and the author starts this section talking about some of the cries that he notices by watching the news. What cries from God's children are you aware of right now? Have you considered what cries you might not be hearing or find agreeable?
2. On the subject of angels, the author explains that God is surrounded by angels in heaven, and the angels might help God make decisions. Abraham being given information about Sodom brings him into their company. What do you think about all this?
3. The words "justice" and "righteousness" are being brought up here (one paragraph on page 22). The author explains that there isn't a proper equivalent of either Hebrew word in our English language, and that can lead to misinterpretation of scripture. What do you think about how the author interprets these words and how it applies to the story of Abraham?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of all the earth and all the heavenly hosts, we give you thanks because you hear the cries of all those who cry out. You hear all cries, and you hear our cries. You hear all, and you do not forget those you hear. To you alone is true justice and true righteousness, beyond our ability. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #5, Goldingay pages 23-29

Highs and Lows

Gen. 18: 21-33

1. This is the passage of Abraham pleading with God to spare the lives of the people in the city of Sodom... Or perhaps, is Abraham bargaining with God, and appealing to God's mercy, getting lower and lower with the number of faithful people that need to be found? Is it actually possible to bargain with the almighty God, to change God's mind... or could God already know how things are going to end?

2. The author brings up the theological concept of theodicy, which is partly about asking the question "Why does God allow bad things to exist?" The author expands this, asking how can we know that God is fair and just with all the unfairness and injustice that we see in the world. Is there a time when you have questioned God's justice and fairness?

3. The word for "*to forgive*" in the Old Testament text sometimes should have an extra implication for "*to carry*." The author explains that Abraham is suggesting that God not just forgive the people of Sodom, but that God "*carry*" them, and that this should happen despite the majority of the city being presumably against God. Can you picture a connection with Jesus *carrying* the world's sins, and what might you make of this idea?

Gen. 19: 1-14

1. The author explains that God was taking action against the city of Sodom because of the outcry that God heard from there, and not from the actions of the people. What do you make of this?
2. Lot was sitting outside the city, which is a good place to be if he wanted to look out at the world, seeing a more beautiful place outside than the brutality of what took place within the walls. We might assume that Lot is looking for God outside the city, in a way. Lot then protects the messengers that were sent by God, and he partly does this by offering the mob his virgin daughters in their place. What do you make of Lot, with all this considered?
3. What do you make of Lot's son-in-laws who laughed at Lot who was relaying God's warning? Is there a comparison between this incident of laughing and the laughing that Sarah was doing a few passages before? What can we learn from this?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of unimaginable grace, you showed your love to us by sending us your Son. Through him, the sins of all the world for carried, and we have all been forgiven. We pray that we find you when we seek you and that you remain our guide as we learn and grow. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
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Session #6, Goldingay pages 30-36

Highs and Lows

Gen. 19: 15-38

1. In the previous passage, it is clear that Lot sees the wickedness of the men in Sodom, as they are attacking him trying to get to the two girls that God sent. However, in this passage, Lot appears torn as God is about to destroy the city. Why might have Lot felt this way? What do you make of Lot now?

2. Lot's wife looked back. Why do you think she looked back, and have you ever "looked back?"

3. The author talks about the actions of Lot's daughters after he had taken them to live safely in a mountain cave. The author explained that the Bible does not appear to condemn the incestuous actions of the daughters here, but later in the Biblical narrative the two groups of people that descended from their offspring are sometimes seen negatively. What do you make of this?

Gen. 20: 1-13

1. The author highlights a flaw of Abraham in this passage, that being that he projected the king of a foreign land to have no reverence for God or human life. In fact, the author explains that in this passage it is Abraham who is not respecting God or other people. What do you make of this?
2. We can see God's commitment to the covenant that was made with Abraham in this passage. King Abimelech had done nothing wrong, but yet God makes sure to threaten him with death if he does do anything with Sarah that would risk the fulfillment of the covenant. Ultimately, why do you think God is so serious about this covenant and what will it end up doing?
3. Why might have God told the king that Abraham, being God's prophet, could pray to God for him and save his life? Abimelech had done nothing wrong, but why might God still want to get the prayers of the prophet involved?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

Gracious God of forgiveness, we know that we are born into sin. You know all our wrong-doings and all our faults, and yet you are able to forgive us. Continue to remind us that we are continually forgiven so that we might do your will to make this world closer to your kingdom. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #7, Goldingay pages 36-43

Highs and Lows

Gen. 20:14 - 21:14

1. The story of Abraham and Sarah's first interaction with King Abimelech concludes in this passage. Overall, this just seems like a very strange story, and it might seem that the story would be just fine without it there. Why do you suppose that it was important to include this?

2. The author explains on page 38 that Abraham was wrong and he was screwing things up, and yet he retains his place in God's council. What might be at work in Abraham's life (that is also at work in our lives today)?

3. It would appear that Sarah does not want to have Ishmael around because it runs the risk of him (Ishmael) taking Isaac's inheritance. God seems to agree, since this would not be a part of God's plans. But the thing is, Hagar and Ishmael are still loved by God. How do we know this?

Gen. 21:15-32

1. Why might have Hagar needed to become hopeless for her son before God's messenger intervened?
2. Hagar and Ishmael's story continues on, Ishmael was not part of the covenant that God made with Abraham, but Ishmael still is the father of a great nation. What purpose might God have for doing this?
3. What does the author mean with saying that God is "with" both Abraham and Ishmael? Is it different for each, or actually not?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

Lord, we give you thanks that through your son we have received an inheritance greater than any other, and one that can never be taken away. Keep us all secure in hope and faith, the hope of the resurrection, and the faith that by your will our broken world is fixed. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #8, Goldingay pages 43-50

Highs and Lows

Gen. 21:33 - 22:2

1. This passage is often titled “The Testing of Abraham.” Why do you think it was necessary for Abraham to be tested?

2. When this text is part of a worship service, it is often paired with Psalm 13. Read it below. Do you think this adds meaning to “The Testing of Abraham?”

*1 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?*

*2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?*

*3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
4 and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.*

*5 But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.*

*6 I will sing the Lord’s praise,
for he has been good to me.*

Gen. 22:3-10

1. God is testing Abraham in such a way that it would go against God's stated covenant if God's command is fulfilled. The author compares this test to a statement made by Jesus about being one of his disciples. Read Luke 14: 25-35. With these two together, what is God saying, overall?
2. When Isaac asks about the animal for the sacrifice, Abraham tell him that God will provide. God is not prompting Abraham to say this in the text. What do you think was going on in Abraham's mind for him to say this? Was he lying to his son on purpose? Was he holding on to a hope for himself?
3. On page 48, the author talks about prayer. How can we be sure that we are not using prayer to get God to do what we want, as the author suggests often happens?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflective silence.

God of the universe, you revealed yourself through Christ and the prophets. Lead us now in the direction of your will and change us to better serve you. We pray that not our will but yours be done. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #9, Goldingay pages 50-56

Genesis 22:11 - 19

1. The author of our book references the poem below in this section. We could say that the writer of the poem was using a certain hermeneutic with his interpretation of Genesis 22, a certain way of looking at the scriptures. What might have been going through the poet's mind?

The Parable of the Old Man and the Young (Wilfred Owen - 1893-1918)

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

2. On page 51-52, there is a point made about how the father Abraham does not need to sacrifice the son Isaac, but yet God the Father does follow through with the sacrifice of the Son Jesus. What do you make of the statement that God put a huge challenge in front of Abraham, and it was a challenge that God was willing to take on?

Genesis 22:20 - 23:20

1. It is repeatedly stated in this section of the translated scripture that the Hittite people were willing to give the land to Abraham. The author explains this as middle-eastern polite culture, however land has been a scarcity in this part of the world for thousands of years. Could this also be establishing the right of Abraham's line to this land?
2. The author points out the connection of the prophet Isaiah, which is in a fuller section below. This section of Isaiah is prophesying the redemption of Israel, which at the time was exiled to Babylon. Why do you think Isaiah wanted to be sure to mention Sarah and not just Abraham?

Isaiah 51:1 - 3

1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.

2 Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.

3 For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflection

Lord of our country, our planet, and our universe, we thank you for your plan for our redemption, through your son Jesus Christ. Please keep your presence with us as we continue to learn about your holy scriptures. We ask that when we are challenged with something that seems beyond our ability, you intervene and give us the strength, wisdom, and fortitude that we would need, as only you can. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #10, Goldingay pages 57-64

Genesis 24:1-20

1. A particular phrase from this passage has left interpreters puzzled for thousands of years. When the servant of Abraham put his hand under the thigh of his master and swore an oath to him, what do you suppose that means?

2. Abraham makes it clear that the servant is not to go looking for a wife for Isaac who is a Canaanite. The author makes the point that Abraham was likely thinking that a Canaanite spouse will lead you to Canaanite ways. In today's multi-cultural and blended society, this is often not something that is considered (the spouse of a Lutheran pastor is not required to be Lutheran). What do you make of this?

3. It also seems like a simple solution would be to send Isaac out to Abraham's homeland, but this is forbidden as well. The author talks about this on page 60. Why was this so important?

Genesis 24:21-48

1. In the author's first paragraph on page 62, he talks about the possibly misconstrued notions about the "plan" that God has for every human being. The author explains that scripturally the "plan" of God is life abundant (and I would add in that this happens through grace), but God does not have your individual actions and work planned out (as in things you are "supposed" to do). Would you agree or disagree with the author's claim?
2. The author further dashes our hopes! He says that the prayer the servant of Abraham gave asking God to directly become involved in his quest was challenging God to manifest commitment to Abraham, and that if we were to similarly challenge God, we should not get our hopes up. Why do you suppose that is and do you agree or disagree?
3. The servant is the subject of interest to the author in this section. The servant is essentially blessed by association to the work that God was doing in the world. What do you make of this?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflection

God of our hope, we thank you for the active work that you do in the world to freely give universal salvation. We ask that you continue to be with us as we continue to learn your word. Please guide us all away from untrue expectations of your will, and guide us into a better understanding of your truth. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #11, Goldingay pages 64-70

Genesis 24:49-25:6

1. Looking at this section and thinking about our previous session, this “side story” of Abraham’s servant going out to discover Rebekah, has been our focus for a little while. The writers of Genesis considered it important enough to take up an entire chapter in our scriptures. What do you take away from this “side story” about why it is important? Why do you think the writers of Genesis wanted it included?

2. At the conclusion of this “side story,” Issac and Rebekah become husband and wife. This depiction of them coming together is certainly much simpler than today’s ceremonies, and that was typical of marriage in the ancient world. What do you make of the “wedding” of Issac and Rebekah, and what do you think of Abraham taking a second wife (and having multiple children with her)?

3. The children Abraham has with his second wife, Keturah, do not receive part of the proper inheritance that Issac received but they are given generous gifts. Abraham sees to it that they receive something, which is more than they might otherwise get. What do you make of this?

Genesis 25:7-22

1. Here is the end of the story of Abraham, but it's not the end of Abraham's lineage. What do you make of Abraham's death, perhaps about how God was working through the Abrahamic line and once Isaac was born, Abraham's job was done? Think back about the "misadventures" that Abraham and Sarah had earlier in our reading. Is it odd that suddenly with Isaac grown into manhood and ready to take a wife, Abraham was simply not needed any longer?
2. What do you make of Isaac and Ishmael coming back together to bury their father? Do you think the family reunion went well, or could there be issues between the two men that were left unwritten in Genesis?
3. Here, we have a mention of the line of Ishmael. It has been theorized that many modern-day Arab people, and by extension many modern-day Muslims, are descendants of the line of Ishmael. This is something that is debated among historians. What is your option on this?

Closing Prayer

Pause for reflection

Good and gracious God, through your abundant grace, you have given all people an inheritance that is beyond anything we can earn from you by ourselves. Let your spirit be with us as we continue to learn and meditate on your holy word. We ask that you soften hearts and change minds so that any divisions that are among our human family might one day be healed. This and more we pray, in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #12, Goldingay pages 71-78

Genesis 25:23 - 26:5

1. With regard to the birth of Esau and Jacob, the author talks about a dichotomy of people in the world: the people who want to be “first” and the people who don’t really care. There is also competition between two sons, born at almost the exact same time, and with the wealth that being the first born son brings, means only one of the two will carry on the line. What do you make of Esau and Jacob, the birth of our next people of the Abrahamic lineage?

2. The competition between the two sons starts in full when Esau returns from a hunt “close to death” and makes a bargain in order to immediately get food from Jacob. Is Jacob wise while Esau is foolish? Or perhaps is Jacob greedy while Esau gullible?

3. Did you pick up on anything interesting with God coming to Isaac to announce that the covenant was going to continue on with him? Can you speculate if it was possible that Isaac did not know about the covenant that was started with Abraham and this is how he found out, or is it likely that Isaac knew from his father and was anticipating his contact with God?

1. Ah, oh! Here we go again! This time it is Issac and Rebekah who are the “brother and sister.” And just like before, it’s in the kingdom of Abimelech, but this time the king catches on quickly and confronts Isaac. What do you think led to this instance being different compared to the time that Abraham and Sarah did this same thing?
2. Why do you suppose Issac was actually asked to leave Gerar? The translation says that Issac got big, as in, he was blessed by God and obtained a lot of wealth. Was it the danger that Isaac suddenly posed to the Philistines because Isaac was suddenly powerful? Or was it more of an issue of jealousy, that the other people of the area envied what Isaac had accomplished?
3. Let’s look at the two main characters of this particular section of translated text. Isaac seems like an up-right guy, however with the fact that wealth (blessings) just seems to keep coming to him, he also seems kind of like a lucky simpleton. King Abimelech comes back into the story, and he is an extremely wise leader. The king does not necessarily need to make any agreements with Isaac, there is no indication that Isaac wanted the kingdom for himself, but the king chooses to anyway. What’s interesting about looking at these two together for you?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, despite the fact that humanity lies, despite the fact that humanity deceives, despite all the evil sins that humanity continues to do to one another, your love remains with us and your new covenant continues on. We give you thanks for your compassion and forgiveness and we plead with you that you let your presence be felt by each of us as we depart today. Continue to guide us as we continue to study your word. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #13, Goldingay pages 78-85

Genesis 26:34 - 27:33

1. The author talked about the foolishness of parents in this section of the text. To you, is this really about one of the parents of the children being foolish, or is it about one of the children being deceitful? Does Jacob escape blame, perhaps due to Rebekah's involvement? Is it Isaac who should have been paying attention better (or requested help from a servant)?

2. Did you catch who Esau took as his wives at the beginning of the passage? What does it appear that this did to the family relationship?

3. The final paragraph of the section, which is on page 81 of the book, makes a very bold claim: God does not operate on the basis of merit. The author explains that in his interpretation, God is satisfied with using Jacob instead of Esau, the actual first born. The phrase "God uses" seems to resonate here. What are your thoughts on this idea?

Genesis 27:34 - 28:5

1. Not getting too far off the topic of scripture, the author makes an interesting statement about happiness in the second half of page 83. The author states that when good or bad things happen, the mood of a person might change for a few months, but then the person's level of happiness will likely return to about the same level that it was before, when things "settle down" for that person after the big event (examples being getting married or being fired from a job). Could the author be right with this, does a lot of our own happiness come from within and does this mean that in a way we decide when we are happy or not?
2. Esau's murderous rage at his brother... Do you think that it was an appropriate reaction and his anger was understandable, or is this an overly emotional reaction to the deceit of his brother and it is unacceptable? Is there a line between family members that, if it is ever crossed, is completely unforgivable? If there is, should there really be an unforgivable sin between family? Can time heal the wound and close the rifts between family?
3. In the center paragraph on page 84, there is a point made explaining why Jacob (and also why Isaac) needed to not marry one of the local women, but needed a wife of their own people. It is not about ethnicity; it's about religion and the faith of the women in the lives of these men. Do you think this is clear in scripture, or has it been left too open without enough explanation?

Closing Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks for today, we give you thanks for our continued fellowship, and we give you thanks for our families, in whatever shape they might take. Please give us the clearness of mind and calmness of heart to forgive those in need of forgiveness, as your son, Jesus, showed us to do. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #14, Goldingay pages 85-91

Genesis 28:6-15

1. The author starts out his commentary on this section by talking about dreams. He talks about a few dreams that he has had that he actually remembered. Have you ever had a meaningful dream, or even a prophetic dream? If you remember a time you had a confusing dream, what do you suppose that meant?

Here are a few interpretations about common dreams...

Falling in a dream: there is fear or uncertainty in life

Being chased in a dream: there is a desire to escape fear

Dreaming about death: you might be fearful of change

Dreaming about flying: experiencing freedom, or desiring escape

Being naked in public: you might be ashamed of yourself

2. The author reveals to us that Jacob is most likely in the same area that his grandfather Abraham once pitched his tents and built an altar for sacrifices. It is here that he has his vision during a dream. It is like the place where he slept is sacred land. Have you ever experienced anything sacred by being in a special place, and what was that like? What can being in a sacred place do for a person?
3. There is a connection between this passage from Genesis and a passage from the gospels, John 1: 43-51. Jacob did wrong, he stole what would otherwise belong to his brother, but yet, he receives the vision and communication from God. Let's read from the gospel and notice what Jesus tells Nathanael he will witness if he follows Jesus.

Genesis 28:16 - 29:14a

1. There is an idea here that Jacob might understand his relationship with God in the form of something contractual. There is a difference between a real covenant relationship and a relationship that is held together by a conditional contract. How is it that we should think of our relationship with God? Is there really anything contractual about this relationship?

2. On the bottom of page 90, there is a discussion about what God gives to human beings, and that is compared to what human beings give back to God. The author makes the points that God is freely giving greatness to Jacob. In return, Jacob is giving praise back to God... IF God is able to do something for Jacob. There seems to be some unfairness happening here, but what do you think? Can we ever actually give back to God all that God has given us?

Closing Prayer

God of all people, we thank you for our time studying your word and we thank you that despite our sin, you came to earth to connect us with your heavenly realm. We ask that you remain in a relationship with us, knowing full well that this relationship is by your grace alone, and we will never be able to properly return your favor. Give us dreams of your holy and perfect kingdom, that we might proclaim your love for all people on earth. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Pause Group 2020-2021
Session #15, Goldingay pages 91-98

Genesis 29:14b-31 (Page 91-94)

1. The author notes that now Jacob has “met his match!” Jacob, the deceiver who stole his brother’s inheritance, has been deceived! Was Jacob deserving of such a deception (forcing him to work 14 years until he got what he wanted)? Was Laban right to deceive Jacob in such a way, stating that it was the custom for the eldest daughter to be married off first?

2. On page 93, it is explained that in middle eastern societies (especially during this time) it is a custom that there be some sort of arrangement for marriage. The author explains that here, with Jacob working for the father of his desired bride, it might not be an unusual occurrence. Is there anything like this today in our modern western (American) society?

3. The two women in this part of the story do not go unnoticed by God. It was explained in the scripture that God saw that Leah was not loved by Jacob as Rachel was so God opened the womb of Leah (29:31). The author makes the point that it wasn’t God that made these two women infertile, but it was God who was involved with the healing of one of them (page 94). This is meant to be an open question, but why might have God done this for Leah, and not for Rachel?

Genesis 29:32-30:3 (Page 95-98)

1. The author noticed a couple of interesting similarities going back to Abraham. One is how the servant of Abraham found Rebekah near the well, and Jacob found Rachel near the well, but instead of the earnest behavior that Abraham's servant shows, Jacob might be showing off to impress Rachel. Another is how Abraham's wife tells him to sleep with her servant because they are childless, and Rachel tells Jacob to do the same thing, so that she might be able to "have" a child with Jacob. These are similar stories, but with a twist. What do you think is happening here?
2. In this section, with Leah and Rachel, it seems that each woman covets what the other woman has. Leah has children multiple times for Jacob, because she wants Jacob's love. Rachel fully has Jacob's attention and affection, but wants children of her own. Later on in scripture, not coveting will become something that God specifically commands people not to do. Coveting is a deadly sin that can potentially lead to other sins, like wrathful anger towards another person. Where do you see the problem is between Jacob, Leah, and Rachel?
3. The author makes another series of comparisons about the notion of "ill treatment." On page 97, it is explained that the phrase "ill treatment" was used to describe the relationship between Hagar and Abraham/Sarah. It was used to describe how Leah felt that she was being treated by Jacob. Later in scripture, it is used to describe how the Israelites were being treated by Egypt (Exodus). The same idea of "ill treatment" is in all three of these stories. This is an open question, please let your mind wander over all the texts we have studied. Is there a part of the story from now or before that you have an interesting comparison for?

Session Prayer

God of the past, present, and future, thank you for the time that we have had today studying your sacred word. Give us wisdom and courage to spread your good news with our actions and words. Guide our hearts away from coveting and toward generosity. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Genesis 30:22-43 (pages 101-104)

1. On page 103, the author talks about Abraham, Jacob, and David being heroes in the faith, but also people with “clay feet.” These are people who we often lift up today because of the example of good faith they showed, but looking at their whole lives, they were regular people with flaws and weaknesses. Is there anyone else who comes to mind from scripture (Old Testament and New Testament) that is an example of this? Or is there another more contemporary flawed “faith hero” that you can think of?
2. It is pointed out here that Laban uses divination to find the truth about God blessing him because of Jacob’s presence with him. Divination is something that is often associated with the use of magic, and it is actually one of the skills that are taught to student wizards and witches in the *Harry Potter* book series. Later on in scripture, this practice will be discouraged because it is not in God’s nature to reveal universal truth in such a way. What do you think happened in this instance? Did God actually reveal the truth to Laban through divination, or did Laban simply guess correctly? Why is it important for us to keep our faith free from similar fake sources of truth?
3. At the end of this section, the author talks about how the “shrewdness” of both Jacob and Laban are at it again. Laban tries to not lose too many of his flock to the soon-to-depart Jacob, but Jacob knows how to breed sheep and goats. What do you make of this occasional back-and-forth between the two? Is there anything that we can learn from their behavior?

Session Prayer

Generous God, you made your universal truth of love known to us through your Son, our saviour. We ask that you keep the light of truth shining brightly, because sometimes it is hard for us to see. When we make mistakes, please remind us that you are still at work in our flawed lives. When we are not even able to find the words to take before you, guide us towards your peace, and let us remember that you hear all prayers. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Genesis 31:30-54 (pages 108-111)

1. Several questions... Why would Rachel bother to steal the effigies, basically small idols, that was mentioned in the previous passage? Jacob had no idea that the effigies were with Rachel's possessions. Would Laban really have killed Rachel if she was not crafty and hid the effigies better? Laban ends up making a big deal about the effigies probably knowing that they are things that can easily be replaced. What might have really been on his mind?
2. Laban is understandably upset that Jacob stole away his daughters and grandchildren. This is not a thing that is foreign to modern families today. Emotions can run high when family is unable to get together due to travel distances. How can families best deal with this?
3. What do you make of the covenant that is made between Laban and Jacob? How does it compare to other covenants that we have seen in scripture?

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Session #18, Goldingay pages 111-118

Genesis 31:55 - 32:24a (pages 111 - 115)

1. On page 113, the author makes a comment that the Hebrew word used for reverence in this section is the same as a Hebrew word used for fear. It is possible that the prophet writing this particular section of the text may have wanted to make sure that what are two different ideas to us were represented with the same word in Hebrew. What does it mean to you? Is there an element of fear in your reverence of God?

2. Jacob made his plans for attempting to protect half of his stuff if the meeting with this brother goes sideways. Then, he went ahead and implemented his plan, creating two camps. Then, finally, he prayed. It does not seem like Jacob thought to consult God before taking action. If Jacob had gone to God for help first, do you think God would have answered Jacob's prayer to reassure him, or done something else?

3. At this particular moment in the story, what do you think Jacob is more afraid of losing, his life or his stuff?

Genesis 32:24b - 33:17 (pages 115 - 118)

1. These final ten verses of Genesis chapter 32 have bugged theologians and scholars for generations. Who was it really that Jacob wrestled with on the banks of the river? A bible commentary notes that the word used for the “man” that Jacob wrestled with is a form of the word that can either mean “human” or “deity.”
2. Jacob has been dubbed Israel, because he has “wrestled with God and with humans and have prevailed.” What do you think is important about this name change?
3. To use slightly different words, Jacob “fighting” with God is a very bold statement. The author points out that Jacob was also fighting “against” God, as Jacob was fighting to stay the person he was instead of the person that God may have been trying to form him to be. How does this “fighting against God” concept seem to you?
4. We didn’t talk about the family reunion! It actually went fairly well! Why was Esau so happy to just see his thief of a brother?

Genesis 35:1-29 (pages 122-126)

1. Place matters, and we have seen that occasionally throughout the entire story of Genesis. Places are named, monuments are erected, stories are associated, and so on. On page 125, the author makes a point of comparison between the events of chapter 35 (with God telling Jacob to do something and Jacob obeying) and the events of the previous chapter. The family is moving from a land where shameful things happen to a land that God ordained. What do you think of this, and have you ever experienced anything quite like this in your life?

2. You are not seeing things, Jacob does receive his new name from God here, again, for the second time. The commentator noted that Genesis does often have what might be two accounts of some events. What do you think the answer is to the question that the author asks, has Jacob changed as a person because of his encounters with God?

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Session #20, Goldingay pages 126-133

Genesis 36:1 - 37:4 (pages 126 - 129)

1. To start, there is a lot in this section about the lineage, history, and accomplishments of the children of Esau. A big part of the writers of Genesis including this in the book was to explain the history of some places and how they may have been named. This is ancient history, almost entirely lost to time, but it might not be completely foreign to us today. Is there anything like this that comes to mind that is similar in our modern age?

2. It is noted that both Esau and Ishmael are not forgotten by God. There aren't just influential people that come from Esau's children, but outright kings. However, it is still the Abrahamic line now continuing through Jacob that will go down in history as the most influential. What do you think of this notion that God still blesses people even though they are not part of God chosen lineage?

3. The ancient nations of Israel and Edom will occasionally have fights in the future, even if Jacob and Esau are getting along fine now near the ends of their stories. Yet, God still has a purpose for both nations. How do you think this relates (or doesn't relate) to the countries of the world today?

Genesis 37:5-36 (pages 129 - 133)

1. The commentator here talks about how the deceitfulness that was present in Jacob is now present in his older sons, and that deceitfulness has come against him. Do you think this is a situation where the “sins of the father” are once again coming back to haunt him, or do you get a sense that something different is going on?
2. What do you think of Reuben’s plan to go back later and rescue Joseph? Do you think it was a concern for his brother and for his father’s appreciation, or do you think it may have been self-serving?
3. This story of brothers turning on one another has been repeated throughout Genesis. Think back to the sons of Adam and Eve, and how one killed the other. The blood of Abel “cried out of the ground” to God after he was killed by his brother. Could the brothers in today’s reading have thought that they should not kill their sibling because they are learning from history? Jacob would have likely taught them about God, so might they have been worried about killing someone having prophetic dreams?

Genesis Part 2

Study Questions for Session 21

Genesis 38: 1-30

1. What was the custom regarding a man who died without an heir? (See Deuteronomy 25: 5-6)
2. How did Judah react to the news of Tamar's pregnancy?
3. Tamar tricked Judah into making her the mother of his heirs. Why? Was there anything that would be pleasing to God in this action?
4. Do you suppose that Judah or Tamar had any inkling of the importance of what God was doing in and through their lives? Do you have any inkling of what God could do through your life?
5. How do Judah and Tamar point us to Jesus?
6. Have you ever experienced unjust situations or circumstances that you were unable to control in your life?

Genesis Part 2

Study Questions Session 22

Genesis 40:9 - 41:24

1. Why did Joseph say the interpretation of dreams belongs to God? What does that reveal about Joseph's perspective on life, gifting and faith?
2. Notice verse 41:1 says, "Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed." It took two full years for Joseph to be released from prison. That is a long wait to find out what God is up to! How would you handle waiting two years in prison while you wait for God to make a move. Would you trust in God to work on your behalf?

Genesis 41: 25-57

3. It was thirteen years since Joseph's brothers betrayed him. During the time after he moved to the palace, the prison and back to the palace to be second in command. Working in a place of service. What wisdom do you think Joseph gained over those thirteen years?
4. Reflect on God's goodness and grace to you. What insights do you have for the joys and challenges you will face in the future?

Prayer – I thought of this hymn as we study today's chapters. May it be a prayer that resonates with you. Please pray it together:

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

**Oh love that will not let me go
I rest my weary soul in thee
I give thee back the life I owe**

**That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be**

**Oh light that followest all my way
I yield my flickering torch to thee
My heart restores its borrowed ray
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be**

**Oh joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to thee
I trace the rainbow through the rain
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be**

**Oh cross that liftest up my head
I dare not ask to fly from thee
I lay in dust's life's glory dead
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be. Amen**

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: Tom Fettke / George Matheson / Albert Peace

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Session #23, Goldingay pages 147-155

Genesis 42:1-35 (pages 147-151)

1. The author says that Joseph is a bit of a mystery because he is playing games with his brothers throughout several final chapters of Genesis. What do you think? Was Joseph harboring resentment towards his brothers, and that was the main reason for his aggressive behavior toward them? Or was Joseph more benign and looking to teach his brothers a lesson while getting them to repent?

2. Much like the previous question, what do you think was going through Joseph's mind when he saw his dream from years earlier come true, when his brother got down on their knees, begging him for food?

3. Why would the money remaining in the bags with the grain be such a reason for panic to the brothers?

Genesis 42:36-43:34 (pages 151-155)

1. The author makes an interesting point in this section about Jacob being the victim of his own deceptions. His son's inherited this trait, they sold Joseph off, and Jacob is the one suffering the most. What do you think about this?

2. Jacob is terrified that he is about to lose the rest of his sons. If the group likes, we can explore this. Why would this be such a terrible thing for Jacob?

3. There is a hearty meal is served for the Joseph's brothers. In scripture, Joseph breaks down at one point during this out of affection for his brothers. What does this tell us about Joseph's character?

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Session #24, Goldingay pages 155-162

Genesis 44:1-34 & Genesis 45:1-26

1. Joseph further torments his brothers, this time by having one of his servants secretly put his silver chalice in the bag of his brother Benjamin. Joseph demands that as punishment for attempting to steal from him Benjamin remain behind as Joseph's slave. What were Joseph's brothers concerned over and what did they end up trying to do?

2. Joseph is unable to keep up the facade and he reveals his identity to his brothers. What do you think was going through the minds of his brothers?

3. The author talks about "tough love" during the first section for today. What is your impression of tough love? Have you ever been on the receiving end of tough love? Do you think it works, or is tough love a bit too harsh?

4. The author says that Joseph is the embodiment of Romans 8:28. Let's take a look at that section of Romans, 8:18-30. What can we gather from this section of Romans and does this make events in Genesis seem a little different?

5. Around the top of page 161, the author makes the point that it was according to God's plan that this family, the line of Abraham, survive this famine. This is because it was God's plan to bring about the saviour from this family's lineage. What do you think of this?

6. The author states that God does extraordinary things with suffering, thinking about the events of the Genesis story and the story of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. What do you think about God working through/with suffering?

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Session #25, Goldingay pages 162-169

Genesis 46:1-34 & 47:1-26

1. “Call no one happy until they are dead.” Read what the author means by using this phrase on page 163-164 (and throughout this section). What does this phrase mean to the author? Does this phrase mean anything to you?
2. The author’s translation of Genesis 46 gives us another big, long paragraph about genealogy and how many children belong to whom. To us, these long statements seem strange and they can certainly be summarized to take up a lot less space (do we really need to know all the names of the children?). There are reasons for these long sections of the text. What do you think the reason for this is here?
3. What do you think of the author’s statement about how “unsettled” people, like shepherds, make “settled” people, like the established Egyptian farmers and workers, feel uneasy? Does this happen with immigrant communities today at all?
4. Egypt starts out as a place where the Abrahamic line can find refuge and thrive, but we know that by the events of the book of Exodus Egypt is seen as a place of oppression by the ancient Israelites. What do we find out happened to the Egyptian people in Genesis 47? The author suggests that Joseph’s extended family is swept up in this as well. How do you see this as being related to later biblical events?
5. Jacob blesses pharaoh in Genesis 47. We already talked about the pharaoh of Exodus, which is a pharaoh that we know very well, being a very different person. What do you think of Jacob’s action?
6. The author makes interesting commentary about “nationalism,” which is the process of a government body acquiring industry that was previously held by private citizens. In the case of the Egyptians, this led to the people who previously owned and farmed their land needing to continue farming it, but the land was no longer their own. What do you think about this practice, which is both ancient and modern? Do you think there is something wrong about what Joseph did, or was there no other way?

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Session #26, Goldingay pages 169-176

Genesis 47:27-48:22 & 49:1-28

1. It is plain to see that Jacob has grown into old age and might be experiencing what Joseph seems to think is confusion. This is of course a sad state to see any loved one in. Have you had any experiences seeing this in loved ones? In this case of Jacob, he might have been doing something intentional as well. Do you think Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons was done out of confusion or was it intentional?
2. There is a lot of talk about younger sons being placed above older sons according to God's plans. The two full paragraphs on page 172 discuss this. Is there anything that stands out to you? What do you think this is telling us about God and the work that God does in the world?
3. Why do you think Jacob requested to be sent back to his own country for burial? Why is this important to the story?
4. There are some really interesting depictions in the author's translations of Genesis 49. What stands out to you? What seems appropriate or just plain weird?
5. In this particular section, the author really takes the time to dig into the scripture itself and what Jacob's blessing to his sons means for their future. The author says that this might have happened because Jacob was near the point of his death and his mind was able to concentrate more on the future. This is an interesting idea. What do you think about this?
6. At the end of this section, page 176, the author makes a point about why the blessing is different to each of the sons. Why didn't Jacob give an equal blessing to each of his sons, is what we sometimes ask. What do you make of the author's answer to this question, that it's basically because call people are different? Is it a best practice to give equal "blessings" to all others?

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Session #27, Goldingay pages 176-180

Genesis 49:29 - 50:26

1. What do you think of Jacob's instructions, that he be transported far away and buried in the place that his ancestors had been buried? How impressive would that caravan have been traveling there? Is there anything that stands out to you?

2. Somewhat like his father, the last thing that Joseph tells his brothers (and presumably their surviving families) is that they are to take up his bones from their current home in Egypt. Do you think that Joseph knew that eventually the family of Israel would be returning to the promised land?

3. The author explains on pages 178-179 that both Joseph and Cardinal Roger Mahoney have a different state of mind when it comes to the people who have done wrong to them. How can you explain this and what does it look like to you? Do you think that this different state of mind is something that you would aspire to do?

4. The stories of both Joseph and Jesus are partly examples of how human beings can do the worst possible things to one another, and God can get involved and turn that into something good. It doesn't always happen, but when it does, it becomes something better than what we could have possibly hoped for. What do you think of this and have you experienced this?

5. What did you think of this study of Genesis? What was the most interesting parts? What were the hardest parts? What do you have questions about?