

# 11.1.26 am

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Date: 11 January 2026

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0:00 ] Good morning, everyone. And a warm welcome to this time of worship this morning.! And those of you who haven't seen yet a Happy New Year as well.

! Just as folks are coming in, a warm welcome. And as usual, there's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service. If you're able to stay behind, please do so. I don't think there's any visitors.

I think it's all familiar faces who are here today. A couple of notices to highlight. You've seen them all on the screen beforehand and you've had the email. But a couple of things just to note.

This evening, the service will be taken by Scott. So be encouraged to come along to that. Over the next few days, from Monday through till Friday, if the planes go, I hope to be away at in-service training, they call it.

For those who have students or ministers in training, we have to go away for a few days each year. And so that's this week. So if there's any pastoral issues this week, please speak to one of the elders.

[ 1:09 ] Elders, please note there's a prayer meeting tomorrow at 7. And in the course of the week, there's the usual things going on. The prayer meeting this week will be taken by ENA.

And so please be encouraged to go along to that. And maybe at the beginning of a new year, for those who have never gone to the prayer meeting or those who've got out of the habit of going to the prayer meeting, maybe think about coming back.

You don't have to be a member to go to a prayer meeting. There are people at all different stages who come along. And don't worry, if you come, I'm not going to pounce on you immediately and ask you to pray.

You can sit in peace. So prayer meeting on Wednesday, ENA will take that. And it will be on Zoom also. Friday clubs will resume this week as usual.

And the services next Sunday, both services will be taken by Thomas Davis. Thomas will be at the training as well, so there's no time to prepare. So I'm heading to Carly for the day and Thomas is heading here.

[ 2:11 ] So you will have two good services. So be encouraged to come along. Just one date for the diary. There's various dates, but one date to note in particular is that on the 24th of January, there's a Curry Night fundraiser.

The Island Study Conference, I think it's the 6th to the 8th of February. And there's a fundraiser before that. So there are Currys that evening.

And you can note that in your diary. So these, I think, are all the notices that I have to highlight just now. So let's begin this time of worship and let's sing to God's praise.

The words on the screen in just a moment, a hymn that's very appropriate for these turbulent days that we're living in. Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one king reigning over all.

So I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. So in just a moment, we'll stand to sing to God's praise. Let's sing to God's praise.

[ 3 : 45 ] Let's sing to God's praise.

To the glory, I won't trust in His name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

Though the dread of night overwhelms my soul, he is here with me, I am not alone.

Though his love is sure and he knows my name, for my God is the ancient of days.

None above him and before him, all time in his hands, all his foolish shall remain and ever stand.

[ 5 : 08 ] All the power, all the glory, I will trust in his name, for my God is the ancient of days.

Though I may not see what the future brings, I will watch and wait for the Savior King.

With my joy complete, standing face to face, in the presence of the ancient of days.

None above him and before him, all time in his hands, all his foolish shall remain and ever stand.

All the power, all the glory, I will trust in his name, for my God is the ancient of days.

[ 6 : 19 ] All the glory, I will trust in his name, for my God is the ancient of days.

Well, let's unite our hearts in prayer together. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come into your presence this morning.

That we have the gift of your day, where we are able to be still and know that you are God and that you are with us. And we thank you for who you are, that you are the God that we have sang of and sang to in praise in that last singing.

We thank you for who you are the God that you are the God that you are the God that you are the eternal God, the God who had no beginning and will have no end.

The great I am. We thank you for who you are the God that you are the God that you are the God that you are the God who is with us and not against us.

[ 7:45 ]

The God that we were reminded over the Christmas season is called Emmanuel. the God who came from heaven to this world to be our Savior and to make it possible for our sin to be forgiven to make it possible for us to be called children of God and we ask Lord that you would be at work in the power of the Holy Spirit this day we pray that you would help us to see who we are help us to understand and to agree with you that we are sinners who are in need of a Savior Holy Spirit we pray that you would open our eyes and our ears that we may see and hear the call of Jesus the one who says come to me for forgiveness of sin come to me for rest for your souls come to me for that security where we know that we have a helper who will never leave us or forsake us in this world and who will take us eventually beyond this world to our heavenly home a place where there is no pain or suffering or trouble or tears we ask Lord that you would help us in this world to trust you and to lean upon you we're conscious that the words that we have sang speak to us of the stories that we read of and the stories that we watch on our news bulletins the nations clearly are raging kingdoms rise and we see kingdoms looking like they are falling and we see so much trouble so much suffering so much that is unsettling at this time and if it was not for the fact that you were the God who was ruling over all we would be in a state of constant anxiety but we ask Lord that you would give us peace and that you would help us to trust you we pray for countries where we see so much trouble we pray for Iran at this time we see trouble on the streets we fear for what may escalate through the involvement of other nations and so we commit that situation to you and we ask Lord that you would be at work in that place we thank you that in Iran despite the regime being so against Christianity we have seen and heard of many people coming to Christ and we pray that at this time that dark regime may fall and that that country may become a place where the name of Jesus is able to be spoken in praise openly and freely we pray for those who go back and forth to that country we think of some who come and speak to us here with reports of that nation we ask Lord that you would use them that your people would be lights in the darkness at this time we pray for Ukraine we pray for Russia

Russia as we see that conflict going on we pray for the Middle East where there never seems to be any sense of lasting peace we pray for our own country where things may be in some measure steady we're not dealing with war on the streets but we know that the rules the laws that we pass are so contrary to your word we know that the leaders who are over us are so quick to point us away from Jesus we know that as a nation we have moved away from your word and we pray that you would have mercy upon us and that you would cause us to look again to Jesus we know that we are now classified as an unreached nation but we pray that the light of the gospel would shine once more and that we may see many more people coming to faith in Christ we pray for our community we're always conscious of those who are struggling we pray for those who are in hospital and who are at home receiving treatment at this time we name them in our hearts and we ask Lord that your hand of healing would be upon them we pray especially for little Lydia as we have done over past months we know that Christmas and New Year was a difficult period and we ask Lord that you would sustain her and that she would know your healing touch upon her we pray for those who are grieving we pray for those who are struggling with addictions and we pray for those who are healthy and who are happy but superficially happy because they are lost and we ask that you would awaken the souls of those who are still strangers to Jesus and that you would draw them to yourself so hear our prayers cleanse us from our sin as we confess it bless those who would desire to be here but who can't be here those who watch online we ask Lord that they would know your spirit with them where they are and bless each one of us the homes and the families that we come from those that we maybe have left behind in our houses we pray for them and we ask that you would draw near to them and thank you for the children as we see them and as we hear them we acknowledge with thanksgiving that they are an answer to prayer and we ask Lord that you would bless them and that they would be pointed to and encouraged in their earliest of years to come to Jesus and we pray all these things in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please how are you all today something to show you today does anybody know what this is Finley it's a rope that's right but do you know what kind of rope it is or do you know what job it was it was trying to do over the last wee while what do you think any guesses has anybody got a stove in their house a wood burning stove well do you know what this rope did the job of this rope was to go round the stove to keep the door nice and tight because as long as the door is nice and tight and there's no air getting in once you put the paper in and you put the wood in and you light the fire it burns really bright and you get nice warm heat into the room so this rope was around the edges of the stove to make sure that no air was getting in and as long as the rope's in good condition and it's nice and tight it does its job well what do you think about this rope do you want to anyone want to have a look at it closer you can get your hands nice and dirty what do you think of this rope does it look does it look good to you or does it look bad to you why does it look so bad what makes it look so bad it's all torn see it's all frayed and it's all ragged and it's breaking up and it's kind of been burned so it's melted in some parts so do you think this rope did a good job keeping the door nice and tight and closed over the last few weeks or do you think because it was getting a bit frayed and ragged it was maybe finding it harder to do a good job what do you think it's finding it harder so what we were doing and I didn't realise what we were doing was we were putting our paper and our wood into the stove we'd close the door but it wouldn't really close tight and then you'd have to watch the fire like a hawk because every few minutes it seemed to be going out so what I had to do is I had to go to the shop and buy a new rope and fit the new rope does that look different to this one do you think that'll do a better job it's definitely already doing a better job and I'm so proud that for once in my whole life

I managed to do a DIY thing and it's kind of half working but the thing is boys and girls I actually didn't know that every year you've got to change the rope so that the fire will burn nice and bright and hot and it made me think about something made me think about my heart because you know our hearts have been made for Jesus and our hearts when our hearts are working well we have like a a burning fire almost of love in our hearts for Jesus and when that's the case and we love Jesus in our hearts above everything else we're at our happiest we're working the way that we should be but is there anything that gets into our hearts that causes trouble sin and so not every day not every year but every day we have to come to Jesus and we have to say to him will you please take the sin away from my heart and will you make my heart a place where you are able to live and I'm able to know your love so boys and girls what

I want you and me to do today and every day is be asking Jesus to work in our hearts we're going to sing a psalm in a wee while and the psalmist David his heart wasn't in a good place and so he spoke to God and he said will you create in me a clean heart take the sin away and we're going to sing in just a minute tune my heart to sing your praise so boys and girls it's a new year and let's ask God to be doing a new work in our hearts every day so that we'll be close to him and we'll have a burning hot love for Jesus now let's pray Lord God we thank you that you love us and we thank you that our hearts are made for you as it said as it was written many years ago our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you so we pray that you would work in our hearts whether we're young or whether we're old we pray that you would take our sin away and that you would fill us with a love for Jesus that our hearts would be hearts that sing your praise and our hearts would be happy hearts because we know that we are walking close to you

[ 20 : 47 ] Lord Jesus so hear our prayers and help us we ask in Jesus name Amen we're going to sing now to God's praise and we'll sing mission praise 1164 come thou fount of every blessing tune my heart to sing your praise streams of mercy never ceasing call out of every blessing of every blessing to my heart to sing your praise screams of mercy never ceasing all those songs of life is praise songs of God's abundant treasure songs my angel tongues above songs that tell the timeless measure of my heart's unchanging love

I will remember God's great mercy by his help I safely come and I know he will not fail me but will surely bring me home Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering far away from God and to rescue me from danger shed for me his precious blood who complains I am his debtor may I this thought in you let that grace grace more like a fetter find my wandering heart to hear prone to wander Lord I feel it prone to leave the God I am take my heart oh take and seal it seal it from your courts above okay boys and girls if you head to

Sunday school remember to pray for them as they go and if we keep turn in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 35 one last time and we come to the end of our studies in the life of Jacob so we're looking at a section of this chapter and we'll just recap refresh a few lessons that we were looking at last time round also

Genesis 35 and at verse 1 God said to Jacob arise go up to Bethel and dwell there make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau so Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments then let us arise and go up to Bethel so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone so they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had and the rings that were in their ears Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem and as they journeyed a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them so that they did not pursue!

He came to Luz that is Bethel which is in the land of Canaan he and all the people who are with him and there he built an altar and called the place El Bethel because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother and Deborah Rebecca's nurse died and she was buried under an oak below Bethel so he called its name Alon Bakuth God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan around and blessed them and God said to him your name is Jacob no longer shall your name be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name so he called his name Israel and God said to him I am God Almighty be fruitful and multiply a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him and Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him a pillar of stone he poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it so Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him

[ 26 : 29 ] Bethel then they journeyed from Bethel when they were still some distance from Ephrath Rachel went into labor and she had hard labor and when her labor was at its hardest the midwife said to her do not fear for you have another son and as her soul was departing for she was dying she called his name Benoni but his father called him Benjamin so Rachel died and she was buried on the way to Ephrath that is Bethlehem and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb it is a pillar of Rachel's tomb which is there to this day Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder while Israel lived in that land Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine and Israel heard of it now the sons of Jacob were twelve the sons of Leah Reuben

Jacob's firstborn Simeon Levi Judah Issachar and Zebulun the sons of Rachel Joseph and Benjamin the sons of Bilhah Rachel's servant Dan and Naphtali the sons of Zilpah Leah's servant Gad and Asher these were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan Aram and Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre or Kiriatharba that is Hebron where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned and the days of Isaac were 180 years and Isaac breathed his last and he died and was gathered to his people old and full of days and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him Amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us we'll sing again now to God's praise and we'll sing from

Psalm 51 Psalm 51 a psalm of repentance a psalm of confession and we'll sing from verses 7 to verse 13 of the psalm to the tune St. Kilda Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me I shall be cleansed so here wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow down to the end of verse 13 and we'll stand to sing if we're able to God's praise who thou with hyssop sprinkle me I shall be cleansed so!

yea, wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow!

of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice that slowly its very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice!

[ 30 : 16 ] all my iniquities brought at thy face hide from my sin he is our clean heart Lord renew our rights can be within cast me not from thy side nor take thy holy set away!

restore me thy salvation! joy with thy three spirit stay!

Then will I teach thy ways unto those that transgress thee and those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee!

thee! I pray for a moment as we turn back to the passage that we read our heavenly father we thank you for your word and we acknowledge we confess that we are the sinners that David sang of in that psalm he had his eyes opened to see that he was a sinner and we pray that each one of us would have our eyes open to see that we too are sinners and our prayer is that as we open your word that we would be turned unto thee that we would look to Jesus that we would turn to Jesus that we would call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and that we would know the joy of your salvation the assurance of forgiveness and eternal life and we pray that we would live lives which are holy and pleasing to you help us we ask we pray for the children in the

Sunday school we thank you for them and for the children in the creche we ask that you would bless them that they would come to you in the early years and Lord we pray for every other congregation that meets as we do just now we pray for the congregations around us in the village here for the Church of Scotland for the Free Presbyterian congregations as they meet just now and we ask Lord that they would know your blessing as we pray that we would know your blessing at this time speak we pray to our hearts and may the name of Jesus be lifted up in this community and across this nation and across all nations for you are the God who is worthy of our praise and we ask all these things in Jesus name Amen Amen Well if you could open your Bibles if you've got them with you at Genesis chapter 35 and as I said this takes us to the end of our studies in the life of Jacob and as we sign out as we come to the end of this study we can ask the question what lessons as Jacob looks back across the span of his life it's not quite at the end of his life but in terms of the details that we see in his life's experience as he looks back at the span of his life as he steps forward in God's will at this point what lessons does Jacob leave us with lessons that he's learned often lessons he's learned the hard way what does

[ 34 : 53 ] Jacob we could say encourage us to do as we come to the end of this study in his life there's six lessons and we already looked at the first three and so we're really giving more time to the second three today but I want to just give a quick recap on the first three lesson number one that Jacob shares with us in Genesis 35 as he encourages us to recommit our lives to God or if we've never committed our lives to God to for the first time commit our lives to God because that's what God calls Jacob to do in verse one it's to commit or to recommit his life to go in God's way and to walk in close with the Lord if we were to track back through the life of Jacob we can say that his walk with God was intermittent to say the very least sometimes we see people who are

Christians and they just seem to walk steady all the way through their lives the truth is nobody really does but it sometimes looks that way but as we see Jacob it doesn't even look that way his walk with God was all over the place he hadn't always walked steady in fact he rarely walked steady and at this point that we pick up in Genesis 35 Jacob actually had been straying from God for the last 15 years he was out of the place of God's will God called him to go to Bethel Jacob stopped seven miles short of Bethel because he did his life and the life of his family was turbulent to say the least because they weren't in the place that God would have them be doing what

God would have them doing they were straying they were wandering they were drifting from God but God in his great patience doesn't cut Jacob off but rather he calls him back and Jacob hears that call of God go to Bethel come to Bethel come to me and Jacob responds not by hardening his heart again but by recommitting his life to God so we could say the first thing Jacob says to us even as we go into this new year is recommit your life to God stop going your own way stop pleasing your selfish self

Jacob says to us in the way that I did instead says Jacob resolve to go God's way and live in a way that is pleasing to him I wonder is there anyone here this morning and you're hearing that call no point in me stamping my feet and waving my arms and shouting and saying listen to the call of God it'll make no difference because it's not my work it's the work of the spirit but maybe there's someone here who's never come to Jesus always been aware that he's the savior always been aware that he went to the cross to die for sinners but as a sinner you've never come to him well today he's calling if you can hear this and you have opportunity not to harden your heart but to come to

Jesus and to receive the forgiveness and the life that he alone can give and it might be here today that there is a Jacob who for 15 years or some other period of time has been straying we all stray as Christians sometimes we stray to the point that our souls are numb we can't hear him anymore we can't feel his presence anymore he's just so far away and then one day we hear his voice saying come to me come back to me and we have the promise that if we return to him he will return to us and we have the illustration through Jacob the wayward man of

[ 40 : 21 ] God that as God calls him he is received as he returns recommit your life to God that's the first lesson the second lesson that Jacob shares with us is that he has to and he encourages us to repent of idolatry that's verses 2 to 4 Jacob's home was full of idols he and his family had a supply of their own little gods and Jacob knows that they can't be committed to the one true God whilst holding on to these little idols these little gods so Jacob leads his family to repent to leave the idols behind as they follow the Lord to Bethel and so we are given this lesson for us to import into our lives we are to repent of idolatry and again we went over this last time but let me just take a moment again to ask you the question that I've been asking myself this week what idols do you struggle with because every

Christian has a struggle with particular idols it can be a person a relationship it can be a material thing it can be a leisure interest it can be a sport it can be a career something something that always seems to get in the way of our walk with God that always seems to be more important to us than giving time to God so what is that thing real question take a moment and in your heart name it name that thing name that sport name that relationship that always takes precedence over our relationship with God will this be the year asks

Jacob that we resolve to repent of making people or pursuits or material things our idols will this be the year that we truly ask the Lord to help us put these things in their proper place so that we may seek first not last not second but that we may seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness recommit your life to God says Jacob repent of idolatry the third point is relax God is with you because Jacob discovers as he as he goes God's way as he heads in the direction of Bethel he discovers

I think it's verses five to eight isn't it that all the enemies that he feared they don't attack him because they have a fear of Jacob because they know that God is with Jacob so all the stress about the journey was unnecessary stress because God was with him just as he promised he'd be with him and if we are God's people we can relax knowing that God is with us there's so many houses I go into when I go in news 24 is on the TV screen and there are people who are in a state of anxiety and stress look at the state of the world look at Russia look at Ukraine look at what's happening on the streets in America look at

Iran how's this going to how's this going to escalate and all these are kind of they're concerning new stories and they may lead to conflict that comes much closer to our shores than we've seen for a while but if we are God's people even if the conflict comes into our own backyard we can relax knowing that God is with us we sang it though the nations rage kingdoms rise and fall there is still one king reigning over all so I will not fear for this truth remains that my God is the ancient of days if you don't have God as your God of course you're going to fear but if you can say that Jesus is your saviour the Lord is your

[ 45 : 58 ] God and no matter what happens we can be at ease because through life through death into life everlasting God is with us relax God is with you says Jacob point number four which is where we get into new territory Jacob says to us remember your name remember your name now if we rewind just for a moment to Genesis chapter 32 we can note there at that point in verse 28 of Genesis 32 that Jacob actually had his name changed God meets with Jacob and he says to Jacob your name shall no longer be called Jacob but Israel so that's verse 28 of Genesis 32 God comes to Jacob and he says I'm going to give you a new name not

Jacob anymore but Israel one commentator says his name Israel was a sign of God's blessing but then the peculiar thing as we read on from Genesis 32 up to where we are in Genesis 35 it seems that the name that Jacob was given it just drops off the radar it seems to have been forgotten Jacob from Genesis 32 up to Genesis 35 he's still called Jacob and the reason for that is because he hasn't been living a life that is consistent with his new name but now in Genesis 35 as Jacob recommits his life to God stops straight and seeks to be obedient to

God God says to Jacob remember your name not your old name Jacob which means twister sinner but your new name Israel which means a God mastered man and live a life says God that is consistent with your new name verses 9 and 10 we have that conversation God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Pad and Aram and blessed him and God said to him your name is Jacob no longer shall your name be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name so he called his name Israel and then God reminds Jacob or Israel again of the blessings that were promised him as he seeks to live for

God's glory God said to him verse 11 I am God almighty be fruitful and multiply and all these promises that have been given before they're underlined for Jacob again a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you!

God God comes to Jacob and says remember your name remember your new name remember the name that I gave you now as we apply this if we are trusting the Lord today what is our name well your name is Christian not Murdo or Kenny or Duncan or Andrew or Natalie or Donald your new name is Christian Christ's one and that's a great privilege that Jesus would give us his name it's also a great responsibility that we are his witnesses that we are what the apostle

[ 51:14 ] Paul calls ambassadors for Christ so as we go into this new year let's remember when we work in the shop or when we play football on the pitch down the road let's remember when we message on Snapchat or Instagram or whatever it is that we use let's remember when we go into the office or the hospital ward or the home that we visit or the classroom let's remember that if we are God's people we carry the name of Jesus into all these places and in a small community like this people will say that's a Christian that's one of Christ's ones that just walked in here that just made that fair but hard tackle sent that message it's one of

Christ's ones so let's with God's help try to live lives that bring honour not dishonour and glory to the name of Jesus remember your name says Jacob the fifth point is we are to be realistic that's a lesson that Jacob learned and he shares with us we're to be realistic because the truth is God's people will experience joy and will experience sorrow in this world Jacob we see here he has repented of his sin his idolatry he's recommitted his life to God he is heading in the direction that God is calling him to go to he's arrived in

Bethel he's actually journeying from verse 16 and following on from Bethel but they're in the place of God's will that's the point he's in the place of God's will as is his family but what we see here is that they don't live happily ever after sometimes that's what we think if I become a Christian if I commit my life to God all the trouble that I'm having just now it's going to dissolve it's going to disappear I'm going to live happily ever after that's not a truth that we'll find anywhere in the Bible yes God is with us but God's people are not immune from the troubles of this world and that's clear to see in verses 16 to 26 so let's just read that section again then they that's Jacob and his family they journeyed from Bethel when they were still some distance from Ephrath

Rachel went into labor and she had hard labor and when her labor was at its hardest the midwife said to her do not fear for you have another son and as her soul was departing for she was dying she called his name Ben-Oni which means son of my sorrow but his father called him Benjamin which means son of the right hand there's a point there's a point perhaps to note there just as we look at the name Rachel as she's dying she says call call this this boy Ben-Oni a son of my sorrow all she can see and experience is sorrow at this point and Jacob in the past tended to just acquiesce he didn't give a lead he didn't take a lead in the family but at this point

Jacob he actually says no we're not going to call the boy that name we're going to call the boy Benjamin not Ben-Oni and Benjamin means son of the right hand and what Jacob is learning in the midst of intense sorrow is that God was still with him to this boy Benjamin would be a constant reminder that even though it was so hard when he came into the world God was still with him verse 19 so Rachel died she was buried on the way to Ephrath at this Bethlehem and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb it is the pillar of Rachel's tomb which is there to this day

[ 56 : 40 ] Israel journeyed on notice he's not called Jacob now he's called Israel Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Edir while Israel lived in that land Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine his auntie actually and Israel heard of it now the sons of Jacob were twelve sons of Leah and the sons of Rachel Joseph and Benjamin the sons of Bilhah Rachel's servant Dan and Naphtali the sons of Zilpah Leah's servant Gad and Asher these were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paran Aram and just as we scan through these verses from 16 to 26 there's a lot packed into these verses and I'm not going to take any time to step through it in any detail there's times of great joy in this in this section because

Jacob's family is growing just as God had promised that his family would grow we read about the birth of the son Benjamin that would have been of huge joy as Jacob has his son and we read actually that Jacob now has 12 sons so there was great cause for rejoicing as the family grows and as God's promise is fulfilled but there's also times of great sorrow because Jacob loses the wife that he so loved in childbirth awful tragedy and there's times of family crisis there's times of huge trouble and embarrassment and disgrace as one of

Jacob's sons Reuben behaves in a way that would cause the plot writers of East Enders to blush so the whole section here is a roller coaster joy sorrow happiness humiliation hurt and all that is a picture of life in this fallen world there are times of great joy things and we can look around the room and we can think of them and our families and extended families and there are times of great sorrow terrible tragedy we can think of them too and we need to be realistic about that that's what we can expect in this world Jesus said in John 16:33 in this world you will have trouble he said that to his people and we need to give thanks to God for times of joy and we will need to lean upon the

Lord and trust him when we go through times of suffering and struggle one of the most amazing truths of the Christian faith is that we worship a God who knows first hand what it feels like to suffer our God does not watch us from a distance untouched by the sufferings and the sorrows of this world Jesus understands suffering he is the man of sorrows he was acquainted with grief Jesus suffered for us on the cross so that if we trust him we can be saved from suffering that is eternal and we have that constant reassurance that when we suffer in this world whether it's through the illness or the death of a loved one whether it's through family crisis relational breakdown we have the assurance that through it all

Jesus is with us and he understands our sufferings he rejoiced with those who rejoiced he attended a wedding in Canaan he wept with those who wept as he stood at a graveside and he promises that he will help us in our time of need Alistair Begg said in the devotional this morning for those who use it we can look back in history and see that our God has entered the darkness of this world and plumbed the depths of suffering he is a God who knows what it is like to be us he is a God who has set before us a future where there is no pain or crying that's if we're trusting him be realistic says Jacob

[ 62:53 ] God's people will experience joy and sorrow and the final point briefly the final lesson is that we are to be reconciled to God and to others verses 27 to 29 and Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre or Kiriatharba that is Hebron where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned now the days of Isaac were 180 years and Isaac breathed his last and he died and was gathered to his people old and full of days and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him so as we finish what we see is that Jacob for all his wanderings Jacob as we finish this chapter we see that he is he's reconciled with God he's trusted

God he is trusting God he has recommitted his life to the Lord and as we finish we see that he is reconciled with his brother Esau albeit it's at the deathbed of their father one commentator Baldwin says the death of Isaac was the occasion for a family reunion Esau and Jacob again meeting at the deathbed of their father Isaac thus lived to see that in the providence of God his two sons had been reconciled and you know the gospel is a message of reconciliation the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 says we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and you know the most important thing that we can do as we go into 2026 is to be reconciled to God we're born in sin we're born as enemies of God there's a distance that sin creates that means

God is here and we are there we're separated but Jesus came into this world so that that gap of separation could be closed he came into this world to take the sin that separates us from God away from us so that we can be reconciled to God so that we can have a relationship with God that begins here and and knows no end and if we are reconciled to God we are as far as it's possible for us to be reconciled to others so let me ask the question as we finish is there are there any Esau's in your life can you think of brothers or sisters or friends that we have been bitterly separated from for a period

Jacob says to us seek reconciliation whilst there is time seek reconciliation if you have been reconciled to God to the work of Jesus seek to be reconciled to others for the sake of Jesus so six lessons from Jacob's life as we finish may God enable us to take these lessons into our own lives and live in a way that pleases him we'll pray heavenly father we thank you for your word and we thank you that even through these narratives which are so far removed from us in terms of distance and time we are able to learn what you are saying to us today in this place in our lives we ask

Lord that you would be working in each of our lives today we pray Lord God that we would not be hardening our hearts as we hear the call of Jesus but that we would be committing our lives or recommitting our lives to him if we are straying we pray for your help we know that we are people who are quick to create and cling to idols show us our idols we pray help us to bury them that we may follow you and help us in a world that is turbulent and sometimes scary to be at peace to relax knowing that you are the God who is sovereign and the God who is with us help us!

[ 69 : 20 ] help us to remember if we are your people that we have been given that new name of Christian and as we step from this place back into our homes back into our workplaces into the different places that we will travel this week help us to remember that we carry the name of Jesus with us and we ask that we would bring glory and honour to your name that we would point people to Jesus and help us in the changing scenes of this world to trust you when there is times of joy that we would be thankful and attribute the grace that we enjoy to the God who gives it and when we are struggling and suffering we pray that we would still be thankful and that we would trust you and lean upon you in times of trouble and we ask Lord that every one of us here that we would be not separated to

God by our sin we pray that we would be reconciled through the finished work of Jesus and as those who have been reconciled to God we pray that if there are relationships that are broken down that we are able to fix that we would seek to do that for Jesus sake so help us we pray as we commit ourselves to you and we ask this in Christ's name Amen Amen we'll sing to conclude from mission praise number 200 I think it is great is thy faithfulness O God my Father let it no shadow of turning with thee that changes not thy compassions may fail not as thou hast be thy forever wilt be greatest

I give blessed greatest I give blessed morning by morning new mercies I see all I have needed thy hand have provided greatest I faithfulness Lord unto me Pummon and winter and springtime and harvest sun moon and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy faithfulness mercy and love great is thy faithfulness great is thy faithfulness morning by morning new mercies

I see I see! all I have thee thy hand has provided great is my faithfulness Lord unto me! heart for sin and peace that endure thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow blessings of life with ten thousand beside great is thy faithfulness great is thy faithfulness morning by morning new mercies I see all I have needed thy hand has from my end great is thy faithfulness Lord unto me

[ 74 : 41 ] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more Amen Amen