



## *Gypped: Picking Up the Pieces*

Genesis 29: 15-28

Eighth in a sermon series on Genesis

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost • 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time • July 30th, 2017

First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois

The Rev. Dr. Forrest L. Krummel, Jr.

A few days ago I had lunch at Thanh Lihn with a professional musician who wedding I officiated at in this sanctuary a few years ago. I will call him Matthew. His music is hard to describe, but it is along the lines of country-blue grass-rock and blues. As we caught up on the intervening years he said something that came to mind as I reflected upon our lesson in Genesis. He said that over the years he'd been cheated out of a considerable sum of money. Now, "considerable" is a relative term, so I asked him, "Are we talking thousands, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands?" "Hundreds of thousands," he replied.

So, how do you recover from something like that? How do you not become jaded and walk away from that which you love? His answer was maddeningly simple. You learn to become wiser and move on.

Three weeks ago we were introduced to Laban, the brother of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac. Today he reappears in all of his glory. Then he wanted to strike a harder bargain for the hand of his sister in marriage to Isaac, but Rebekah cut him short. I can't help but it was because she wanted to get out of his manipulating household!

Today Laban plays a part in the story of Jacob, his nephew. Jacob fell in love with Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter. He strikes a deal with his uncle in which if he worked for Laban for seven years he could have Rachel's hand in marriage. So beautiful was Rachel and so in love was Jacob that to him seven years seemed like a matter of days. Finally the big day arrived; Jacob was to be married to Rachel. The veiled bride met her husband, and they went into his home for the beginning of their honeymoon. It wasn't until the next morning that Jacob discovered a "switcheroo"! Laban had given Jacob Rachel's sister Leah as a wife!

"What have you done to me?!" Jacob cried. Now, God has this wickedly subtle

sense of humor. Jacob's question is the very same question that pharaoh asked Jacob's grandfather Abraham when the old patriarch passed his wife, Sarah, off as his sister. And Jacob, whose name literally means "heel-grabber", was the last person who should complain at being double crossed or tricked. After all, he constantly tried to supplant his brother Esau. He took advantage of Esau's hunger to gain a birthright and deceived his aged blind father to get Esau's blessing—his future.

"It's not right that the younger sister should be married before the older. But finish the proscribed honeymoon week with Leah and promise to work for me for another seven years, and I will give you Rachel as a wife, too." A wiser Jacob completed his responsibility to Leah and, at the end of the week, took Rachel as his wife, while he worked another seven years.

The additional seven years were interesting ones. Laban was true to his character time and time again, and it seems that both Jacob and his father-in-law met their match in each other! In the subsequent years Jacob grew wiser and became scrupulously honest—so as not to give Laban for any grounds to take advantage. Most importantly, he also gave up his right to revenge.

Matthew's story reminded me of the story of Jacob. Someone older and more experienced took full advantage of him. Matthew, like Jacob, could do one of two things. He could become wiser or he could give up. Jesus once told His disciples that they must be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves. They must know and understand the ways of the world but not become jaded and forget who, or more importantly Whose they are.

The Life Lessons from today's lesson are three-fold: we need to constantly learn and become wiser as we build God's Kingdom in this world; we need to be scrupulously honest—above reproach; and we need to give up the right of revenge.

Bad things will happen to us. We will get knocked down. But by the grace of God we will get up. After all, we are an Easter People.

To God be the glory. Amen.