

Series: "Back to The Beginnings Again"

Sermon: "Living Among the 'Red' of the World"

Text: Genesis 36

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- Hey! I got a new phone this week. (Show old rotary style phone)
Actually, it was not the phone that interested me. It was what used to sit alongside or nearby the phone. Phonebooks—white page and yellow pages--phonebooks.
- Do you remember phonebooks? With all the stuff I've hoarded over the years it surprised me that I didn't have an old phonebook stashed in a box somewhere.
- If you lived in a large city, as we did once or twice, in order to list every number in the white pages it required two thick, heavy phonebooks printed on thin, newsprint paper.
- All those years I lived in houses with phonebooks, there is at least one thing I can say for certain about them. Even though they were a "book," I never once read a phonebook from cover to cover.
- I brought my new phone and reminded us or introduced some of us to the concept of phonebooks this morning because chapter 36 of *Genesis* can seem a bit like a phonebook in the middle of the first book of our Bibles. Certainly, some people treat it like a phone book and never even read it from the first to last verse.
- I will make sure that doesn't happen to us today by reading beginning at verse 1 of chapter 36 all the way through what is labeled in my NIV as the first half of verse 1 of chapter 37.
- I will not pronounce all the names correctly even after reviewing them in Hebrew. If I get one of your favorites wrong, talk to me after the service today so I can tell you how bad I feel about that 😊
- Here we go...**READ Genesis 36:1 through Genesis 37:1a**
- I mentioned that reading this chapter has been compared to reading a phonebook. However, what I didn't say was that this is more like reading the yellow pages phonebook than the white pages.

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- The white pages, with a few minor distinctions of larger or bolder type you could pay for to make a business name stand out, listed only names, addresses and phone numbers in alphabetical order.
- The Yellow Pages, on the other hand, were an advertising bonanza arranged by topic. You could place a logo, or a picture, or a catch phrase, or a promise to provide great service in your listing because you paid for it like an ad in a newspaper. I might also have to explain what a newspaper was to some of us for that analogy to work 😊
- To begin to understand the reason for *Genesis 36* being here from Moses, we need to recognize it is more like reading the Yellow Pages than the White Page phonebook.
- I tried to modulate my voice going through the chapter when I came to a topic heading. If you didn't catch those, I'll come back to them in just a bit.
- These headings or division titles helped to make Moses' main point for his readers. They were about to enter the Promised land—their home promised by God. It would be a land occupied by many different peoples.
- They would encounter **Canaanites**. They were not to mix their lineage with the lineage of the unbelieving Canaanites. This meant they were not supposed to marry Canaanites. That was a literal prohibition as well as a symbol for life.
- It was a way of saying that mixing God's people and the fallen world's people at the level of faith in the true God or human autonomy and faith in false god's will never produce God's desired outcome for his people and his redemptive mission.
- The Israelites were to be in the world, on a varied mission to different peoples of the world, but they were not to be of the world and its ways of living life apart from faith in the One True God.

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- Putting this in the context of the last few chapters of Genesis, Moses has been building an important lesson concerning being ***in but not of the world***.
- Remember **chapter 34**. Dinah, an Israelite is attracted to the world and ends up forced into a forbidden Canaanite relationship by the evil ways the world operates.
- Dinah's brothers respond to that forced desecration of their sister the way the world would respond because—well because they feel that have to DO ***something—do anything***--and they do that in a vengeful, uncontrolled way as the world would do.
- When God's people are dragged into the world because they have become fascinated by the immense power of the sucking black hole it is, they become trapped in its gravity of sin. They become trapped in the laws of its physics for living an autonomous life without God.
- Then **chapter 35** taught that just living in the fallen world meant God's people would face the *relentless* impact of sin and death.
- Even being God's obedient, consecrated and worshipping people who had chosen to leave their idols and false gods behind buried in the soil of the world where they belonged, did not make them immune from these enemies.
- They still sometimes sinned like unbelievers. Eventually they all would die like unbelievers all died. The Promised Land, as wonderful as it was, was not going to be an immediate, perfect ***heaven on earth***.
- It would be but a step in the redemptive plan of God. We still await the final fulfillment of that plan today—that is the redemption of the whole of Creation by God's Messiah—the Son of God Jesus Christ, who would come through this people of Israel.

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- **Chapter 35** is a description, by examples, of the way life will be for the people of Israel when they encounter not only the Canaanites in the land but other peoples as well.
- And, of course, one of those peoples will be the Edomites—the descendants of Esau. Moses tells us repeatedly in **chapter 36** that all these many Edomite people and peoples came from Esau.
- Of course, we know that Esau, the father of the Edomites, unlike the progenitor of the Canaanites, was a son of Isaac and a grandson of Abraham just as Jacob, the Father of the Israelites was a Son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham. He was Jacob's older, fraternal twin brother.
- These Edomite **cousins** will present another and a different challenge to the faith of Israel.
- Moses wants us to recall the character of Esau the father of the Edomites.
- The name "Edom" is the Hebrew word for "red." Remember that Esau is the hairy **red** twin. He is the wild man of the two.
- Recall back in chapter 25, many moons ago now, when Esau, the sweaty, hairy, wild man hunter returned from an unsuccessful hunt with an empty belly.
- Jacob the slick, scheming heel-gripping, tripper-upper of men from the time of their birth took advantage of his impulsive brother who lived only for satisfying the immediate cravings of his flesh.
- Moses paints the picture of a desperate Esau saying about the pot of stew serving as bait for an impulsive man who lived by his feelings alone, "*Red stuff! Red stuff! Just give the red man Red stuff now!*"
- Esau was a man who lived for this world and cared little about the need for the blessings, promises and plans of the One True God of his father and grandfather.

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- **"And Esau was Edom!"** The Edomites were not Canaanites but neither were they a Godly people. They were not only *in* the world, **they** loved the world. They lived for fulfilling the immediate needs and pleasures that are found in this fallen world.
- They were the consummate **"do something—do anything"** people of the world.
- They were the people of the world who said, **"if I feel it and I want it I must have it and it must be right for me to have it!"**
- How did such godless, autonomous impulses arise in the lineage of a man born the twin brother of the Father of the Israelites?
- Moses tells us how very bluntly in the first lines of the chapter. **"Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan."** Esau married the world. That produced a godless lineage, a *"toledote"* here, of people living for what the world could provide for fulfilling their fleshly desires.
- *Well, Raleigh, if Esau and his people were that worldly God must have SMOTE them—wiped them out in judgment, right?* Not quite says Genesis Chapter 36—**NOT QUITE AT ALL!**
- In fact, the weaker blessing that was all father Isaac had left on his death bed to offer Esau after Jacob had stolen the big blessing, that weaker blessing of offspring seems to have turned out a whole bunch of offspring.
- And, in a Yellow Pages manner, chapter 36 lists those many, many offspring under sections such as **"Chiefs"** and **"Kings"** not under the heading of **"Sad Nobodies Because They Married the World"**
- *"Oh, the time of judgement will definitely come on Esau's worldly people the Edomites,"* says the Prophet Obadiah.
- The time will come when these Edomite *soaring eagles* who are great chiefs of great tribes and even kings of whole nations who act

as if they are as high as the very stars—the time will come when the LORD will bring them down.

- The time will come when the wisdom by which they have met all their desires through the provisions of the world will be shown as foolishness.
- The time will come when the violence they have perpetrated against their relatives, the nation of Israel, will bring violence and shame on them as judgement. Their worldly deeds will be turned back on their worldly heads.
- The time will come when the LORD will rule over all of Esau's Edomite lands and their chiefs and kings will rule no more.
- ***The time will come!*** However, that time is not now, Moses is telling the Israelites who will cross into the Promised land and see the APPARENT great success of living as the Edomites have lived trusting their own feelings and impulses to guide them without trusting God and his Word.
- ***The time of judgement and exposure and fall will come but not yet!***
- No, for now—in fact for many generations the Edomites will look very successful. It is difficult to count how many Edomite names Moses lists as chiefs of tribes in verses 15-30 and then again, even more in verses 40-42.
- Moses doesn't even bother to tell us how some of the names in verses 31-39 are related to the lineage of Esau who is Edom. He just tells us that many of them were kings in this world—kings of whole nations!
- AND, here is one of the best clues Moses gives us as to what he is teaching in the chapter. It is in verse 31. ***"These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned."***

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- Do you get the comparison? Before Israel—the people trusting the One True God—before they are much of a nation at all by the world's standards—Edom—people living for their own desires by their own means and an autonomous faith in themselves and their false gods—Edom has already seen a number of kingdoms and kings.
- ***So who won? Who is successful? Which way proves to be the best? Which way of living works?***
- As God's people—his lineage of faith—have returned to enter the Promised Land following 430 years of slavery in a foreign land, they will find in this Promised Land not only sin and death. They will find what looks like very great success by people who have not been trusting God but just doing what seems to work to get them what they want.
- If sin caused doubt and death brought painful questions, what would this apparent contradiction do to their faith? Be God's people and you'll live as slaves for many generations and then wander around in a wilderness until a whole generation dies.
- Do what works the world's way to build comfort and success in the world and you'll be great chiefs of families and tribes. You'll be kings of great kingdoms.
- Trust God and be a slave? Do *something* that works and be a King? Can you see the temptation? ***I should say have we felt for ourselves that same temptation living in this fallen world as believers? In the world but not of it—on mission for it but not married to it?***
- Our Lord Jesus saw that temptation. **Matthew 4** says the Spirit led Jesus into guess where? Yes! A wilderness! Why? To face this very temptation—the temptation to do whatever seems to work now to bring success.

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- In Jesus' case, the successes he was offered by Satan were good successes. Jesus needed bread to eat for physical life. Jesus was indeed under the protection of the plan of God. Jesus was to be the ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth.
- God's promises—God's Word gave validity to all these potential successes as good things.
- But as the Lord answered to the first temptation, the end alone is not all that matters. **"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every WORD that comes from the mouth of God."**
- It is not simply an **apparent success** that matters. For believers—God's people—achieving **true success** only comes by trusting God and doing things his way, AND importantly, in his timing.
- These temptations placed before Jesus by the evil one are as insidious as they can be because they dangle good, godly outcomes as the bait.
- It is so much more tempting to marry the world and trust in its ways when one does this for what seems like godly outcomes.
- For another class I was teaching these past weeks, I coincidentally was listening again to a series of podcasts about the failure of a large multi-site church in the Northwest and I watched a 4 part TV program about a similar failure of an even larger church—actually a movement—that started in Australia and spread here and around the world.
- Although I would have disagreements with the theology of both of these churches, they would be considered Evangelical and Bible believing.
- As I watched and listened, I was most struck again by how many of the people interviewed said something like, **"I was caught up in it and ignored the warning signs because it worked! The ministry was**

growing and growing. More services were starting. More buildings were being opened. It was hard to think God was not in it and behind it because it was so successful!"

- AH! There is the problem. It is that word "**successful**." How will we define that? In America, we usually define it as bigger, more and fast without much regard for how things got bigger or collected more in a fast way.
- Is that how Jesus defined "success" when Satan offered to make our Lord "successful?"
- Is that how Moses was defining success for the Israelites were encountering the apparent success of the godless people around them—people like the Edomites?
- Esau and the Edomites—Esau was Edom—were consummate pragmatists. I see something—I want something—I need something—I'll do something that gets it for me now.
- The feeling of **significance** that most human beings get from apparent successes in life make those apparent successes and any pragmatic means to achieve them as quickly and as often as possible very, very tempting.
- This may be the most frequent way we Bible believing, conservative evangelical folks have most often married the world.
- As I said last week we often forget the "**every Word of God**" when we forget what Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6 that **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against dark spiritual powers**. Therefore, the ways of the world will not suffice for our strategies and are weapons to battle successfully.
- So often the church—both the church of those who are conservative and those who are progressive become Edomites. We jump into the

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battle pragmatically to try to win it however and as quickly as we can no matter the means we must use to do that.

- It may seem like success at times when we can destroy a flesh and blood person but that is not true success, as Jesus would define it.
- It may feel like success at times when we seem to gain worldly power but just gaining worldly power was not success in Jesus' eyes.
- It may satisfy our need for significance to gain this worldly success and power and to do it quickly but like the Edomites our pragmatism will one day be exposed and judged for the autonomy from God it is.
- I asked you last week if your heart is on fire with a need to do something—anything about the condition of our nation our world our culture—I asked you to please meditate on Paul's description and admonitions for the real battle we fight and how to fight it as he wrote about these in Ephesians 6.
- This week, if this is you and your heart is stirred to do something—anything, I ask you to meditate on Jesus' facing temptation in Matthew 4.
- If your sense is that Raleigh is preaching we ought to be passive as we live in this world of sin, death and "successful" unbelief, please know I am not. I am preaching the important antidote to being sucked into the black hole of the world's pragmatism—I am preaching "waiting on the LORD" with all the active meaning of that great WORD of God that we sometimes forget to feed upon when we want some bread right now.

Recall some of the words of **Psalm 37** that we read earlier:

⁵Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

***⁶He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.***

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***⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.***

***⁸Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.***