Genesis 25:7-10

A dysfunctional Family

The theme for this morning is having a dysfunctional family. One that is torn apart for one reason or the other. In making application to today, we can list many ways families can be and are torn apart. As you listen this morning, I think you can make your own list – and for the main part, make sure it is your family – although you can find it in other people’s families and we can find dysfunction in the work force, the farming community and in the church. Let’s aim in on our own lives, our own families, and the work force we are in, the church family we belong to.

Abraham and Sarah had a dysfunctional family and their dysfunction carried on from generation to generation. This is clearly seen as we study the big picture in the book of Genesis following our text for this morning. Open your Bible please and follow along.

In order to get the big picture of Abraham and family and their generations, we will need to go to Genesis 25:19 through Genesis 28:9. We cannot do this verse by verse – we do not have the time to do go verse by verse - we will trace Abraham’s family and that there were times when things were very dysfunctional! We examine the text today from Genesis 25:7-10:

But the entire account is found from Genesis 25 verse 19 to Genesis 28: verse 9. You can read and study this later. Lots of details to fill in this message!

We do note that despite the dysfunction, the end result was in the Lord’s hands and that the family was blessed by the Lord. People change and do and say things which are not in accord with the Lord’s commands but the Lord does not change!

 Being dysfunctional does not necessarily mean that a person or a family or a congregation is on the wrong track in all they do – it does mean that they are taking matters into their own hands and not following the Lord, and not following the leading of the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit –

The Lord had promised a son to Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and Sarah did not listen to the Lord and he and Sarah took matters into their own hands. Abraham was too weak to resist the temptation and Ishmael was born. This brought on the dysfunction in their family. How often is it with us that we do not zero in on the promises of the Lord and get frustrated etc. ?

And basically we can see the dysfunction in the first family when it comes to Adam and Eve falling into sin. It is important that we realize that the Lord provided for them in supplying an animal sacrifice to cover their sinful behavior. Note: in the Old Testament sin is covered and in the New Testament it is removed. The Lord did not close a blind eye to their sin but provided for them. Abraham and Sarah waited quite a number of years but grew impatient with it all. This impatience is also seen in Rebeca Jacobs real and true love, who had no children until Joseph came.

Now we go to our text:

We begin with an interesting fact about Abraham:

**Genesis 25:7 (NIV)**
Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years.

Perhaps, any of us would not mind living for 175 years. Or would we? What a legacy to live as a Christian for as long as we live. We can look back and see how the Lord has been working in our children, our grandchildren and so on. Abraham could do just that. Although Abraham and Sarah could see the troubles their children faced.

It is fun to see how the Lord has led in our families – Marilyn and me. We each can go back at least four generations – and if we go back to the countries in which they came, even farther. And we can trace the Christian heritage passed on from generation to generation: despite the sins of the parents and the sin that is at their door.

Sister Dorothy of the former Lutheran Bible Institute in a book written by Dr. Berg of the downtown Augustana Lutheran Church in Minneapolis told Dr. Berg she wanted to keep on living so she could work for the Lord. This is the spirit that is good to see. The Book Dr. Berg wrote is titled, “On My Way to Retirement, I Didn’t.” Dr. Berg went to the nursing home and continued his ministry there be continuing to be a man of prayer. So, living a long life is not a problem for ministry in the family.

When Abraham died, Isaac was 75 and Esau and Jacob were 15.

**Genesis 25:8 (NIV)**
Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

**Genesis 25:9 (NIV)**
His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, which shows how the Lord united Abraham’s family. Both sons did this together -

**Genesis 25:10 (NIV)**
the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah.

Abraham married another wife after Sarah passed away. She was named Keturah and she gave Abraham more sons. But they were not involved in Abraham’s burial it was his first family, including Ishmael.

It is interesting that Abraham came from a heathen family. Unbelieving families do not have the unity and comrade ship that believing family’s do. All unbelieving families are dysfunctional it cannot be any other way. It is also shocking that Abraham took Sarah’s servant to be the mother of Ishmael. This came from his background and how he was brought up. This is where the dysfunction begins and continues into other generations!

This family of Abraham was a dysfunctional family! Right from the beginning it was dysfunctional.

Also, it is interesting to note that the Isaac and Ishmael buried their father! This shows us that despite the troubles this family had they worked together in a very good way by burying their father Abraham. Even though Ishmael was not the son of the Covenant. Abraham and Isaac never turned their back on Ishmael. Actually, as I understand it, Ishmael is the progenitor of Islam.

If we concentrate on Jacob, we see he is mentioned quite often in the book of Genesis. He is the son of Isaac and Rebecca and the grandson of Abraham and Sarah. All part of the Covenant – the agreement – the Lord made with Abraham.

The dysfunction in the family is seen in that Jacob and his twin brother Esau. Their struggle begins before birth. And to top it all off, Jacob becomes the favorite of his mother. Esau becomes the favorite son of his father.

Esau was a hunter. He ends up giving Jacob the birthright. He sells it to him for a bowl of soup. Isaac is tricked into giving the blessing which belonged to Esau! Jacob then runs off to live with his uncle Laban. All began at birth with Jacob holding on to Esau’s heel! Then the sly Rebecca urged Jacob to pretend he is Esau and get the blessing from their father, Isaac. Jacob pretends to be Esau and tricks Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing – a blessing that belong to the first born son. Now Jacob ran away. He ran to his uncle Laban.

On Jacob’s trip, Jacob has a dream in which angels appear going up and down a ladder – the ladder connects the earth to Heaven. It is thought that Jesus appears in this dream and wrestles with Jacob. The Lord reinstates the Covenant given to Abraham.

When Jacob gets to Laban’s farm, He is met by another dysfunctional and lying character in Laban. This further shows us that families that are dysfunctional will carry it to other generations. One deceiver and liar meets another deceiver and liar.

Laban promised Jacob that in seven years of working on the farm, that Jacob could marry Rachel. Instead, Laban hides his other daughter Leah under her wedding dress – this way Jacob married the wrong sister. So, Laban gets him to work another seven years before he could marry Rachel. Jacob then met with the Lord and wrestled Him until he got the blessing of the Lord. His name means, “Having wrestled with God.” Jacob did not learn much.

Now there were bad feelings between Rachel and Leah. Leah had children and Rachel did not. Leah wanted to please Jacob by having children. She was trying to please Jacob and earn his love. And Rachel was barren.

**Genesis 30:22-24 (NIV)**
22  Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb.
23  She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."
24  She named him Joseph, and said, "May the LORD add to me another son."

Because Joseph was so favored, the other sons got jealous and sold him into slavery. Fortunately the oldest son felt guilty and had Joseph put in a pit – later selling him to a caravan of businessmen. However, Joseph becomes second in command under the Pharoah. He ends up forgiving his brothers and is united with Jacob who blesses the sons. Joseph and his brothers come together as a family and joined together in burying Jacob. The blessing of the Lord went right with Joseph.

Every misdeed echoes from generation to generation. Adam and Eve at of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then skipping to Abraham, who took matters into his own hands, The favoritism of Jacob and Rebecca, the troubles between Jacob and Laban, the troubles between Leah and Rachel, and the argument over the good fortune of Jacob….and on and on it goes!

The bottom line is that while the Lord does not accept the sinful behavior of people, He can and does have a plan for each one.

“I the Lord Thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

The meaning in the Small Catechism:

“God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should, therefore, fear His wrath, and in no wise disobey them. But He promises grace and every blessings to all who keep them. We should, therefore, love Him, trust in Him, and gladly keep His commandments.”

He will punish any thought, or feeling, word or act, which is contrary to God’s law.

Do children of God always live according to the will of their heavenly Father?

They hate sin, and heartily strive to keep the law of God, but it is their experience that they sin every day, and the new life within them is weak.

All the time these things were happening, the Lord of course was faithful to each family member. What they did as families, what they did as persons, did not alter the Lord’s plan for blessing the people. They sinned. But the Lord never turned His back on them.

Abraham was buried by Isaac and Ishmael.

Isaac was buried by Esau and Jacob.

Laban more than likely learned a lesson as Jacob became blessed by the Lord.

Rachel became the Mother of Joseph. She was blessed again and again.

Joseph was buried by his naughty brothers.

The Lord was at work. It is no different today.