

* * * * *
A BIRTHRIGHT Michael B. Beough
Genesis 27:30-38 July 20, 2008
* * * * *

Is anyone already thinking about starting back to school in the fall? Have you started shopping for school? How many of you will have a locker? What are some things you will put in it?

In this sermon series, I am going to suggest some things our kids can put in their lockers to help them stay strong, safe, and successful in the crowded hallways of life.

One of those things is a birthright. A birthright is sort of like a birth certificate. It tells where you came from, whom you belong to. But it is more than that. A birthright says what your rights are as a child of your parents. The child named on the birthright has the right to the care and provisions of their parents. They have the right to inheritance, unless the parents decide otherwise. But, of course, the birthright I am talking about is the birthright from God.

Here's the deal. I don't want to see any of our kids get in a situation like Esau. Esau sold his birthright to his twin brother Jacob for a bowl of soup.

Here is how it happened. One day, Esau came in from hunting, his favorite thing in all the world to do. He loved the outdoors. Unlike his milk toast brother Jacob who loved staying indoors and playing house, Esau was strong, athletic, virile, a man's man, if you know what I mean. He was the captain of the football team, the homecoming king, a real lady's man. And like a man's man, he had a huge appetite. So when he opened the front door, and the wonderful smell of something cooking in the kitchen wafted over him, his tummy let out a roar and his mouth salivated. When he got to the kitchen, guess whom he found there? It was Jacob stirring a big pot of red stew. Esau was so hungry, he would give anything for a bowl of stew.

Well, while Esau was out hunting, Jacob and his mom had been cooking up something more than red stew. They cooked up a trap to steal the family birthright from Esau. It belonged to Esau because he was the elder son. He was born a couple of minutes before Jacob. But mom loved Jacob more, and wanted him to have the birthright by hook or crook. So when Esau came in starving to death, Jacob sprang the trap. He offered Esau a bowl of red stew if Esau would sign over the birthright to Jacob. And he did it! Not thinking about tomorrow, but only about that moment, he was ready to give up everything for just one bowl of red stew.

Now how dumb can you be? The birthright included twice the amount of inheritance that would go to the other children, the pride of being the head

of the family with all the privileges that go with that, and a special relationship with God with guarantees of lots of children and lots of land forever. Not bad! But for a bowl of red stew, Esau handed over his birthright to Jacob.

Dumb, wouldn't you say?

But that wasn't the end of it. To seal the deal, Jacob needed the blessing of his dying father, Isaac. Only problem was that Isaac loved Esau more than he loved Jacob. So to get his father's blessing, Jacob knew he would have to trick his father. To make it work, he literally stole Esau's identity.

Old Isaac was blind in one eye and couldn't see out of the other. So Jacob simply put on an Esau costume made up of animal skins, did his best Esau impersonation, and got the old man to put his seal of approval on him.

Poor Esau! Always a day late and a dollar short! When he came to get the birthright blessing from his father, he was too late. He and old Isaac learned at the same moment that they had been deceived by Jacob. Both blew their tops, and Isaac would have reversed his blessing at the drop of a hat, had he not been a man of moral uprightness, a man of his word. That was unfortunate for Esau. No begging could change Isaac's mind. Esau wailed in desperation. Jacob had stolen everything from him, including his dignity, which he had never thought much about before. The best his father could do for him was to give him a few acres out back that were as dry as the Sahara desert during a time of drought.

Poor Esau! Dumb, dumb, and dumber! Don't you agree?

And yet even today, in schools all across our metroplex, young people are selling their birthrights for a bowl of red stew. Only the red stew might be popularity, or drugs, or sex, or crib notes, or whatever. Young people making deals with the devil, giving away their futures for the temporary gains of the moment. To satisfy a hunger for things that can never fill them up or make them stronger or smarter or more successful.

I don't want to see that happening to any of our kids. The truth is that every one of them will have to deal with Jacobs when they go back to school. That is why I want them to know that they have a birthright that they must not give up. They have an identity that they must protect and never forget. What is worse than forgetting who you are and where you come from and where you are going? What is worse than having your identity stolen?

I am talking about the birthright that comes from God.

It doesn't matter whether you are oldest or youngest, tall or short, athletic or pathetic, green or orange or blue, smart or not so smart. You have

rights by virtue of the fact that you are a child of God. These rights are guaranteed to you by something that has already happened to most of you. Your baptism. In your baptism, God adopted you into His family. And here is what God promises you.

The right to eternal life

God made every one of us to live with Him eternally. Our time on earth is but a few years. Beyond this life is forever. You can be sure you have eternal life when you commit your life to Jesus and follow him. God wants us to spend it with Him. Don't let anyone take that from you.

The right to achieve your God-given potential

God made every one of us with unique gifts, personalities, and abilities. That is because God has a plan for every life. Too many times we sell ourselves short. God has built into each of us a potential for doing great things to make a difference in this world. Don't let anyone take that from you.

The right to succeed and prosper

The Bible promises that if we know God's Word and do it, we will succeed and prosper in life. Doing God's Word means following Jesus, doing what Jesus did. Does that mean that we will make lots of money and have everything we want? Maybe. But it means more than that. It means we will live a life of great joy and fulfillment. Don't let anyone take that from you.

At the end of this sermon series, we will give you a packet of things to put in your locker. One of those will be your birthright. Don't let anyone take that from you.