A Study of the Book of Genesis
Sermon # 25

“Does the End Justify the Means?”
Genesis 27:1-47

There is a philosophy prevalent in our world today—"the end justifies the means!"
We hear it pro-claimed in many forms: **Nobody is really getting hurt, Well everything turned out ok, We made a profit or It got our man elected.**

The phrase “the end justifies the means,” ori-ginates from Niccolo Machiavelli's book "The Prince," is interpreted by some to mean **doing anything whatso-ever that is required to get the result you want, regard-less of the methods used.** It does **not** matter whether these methods are legal or illegal, ethical or unethical, kind or cruel, truth or falsehoods, democratic or dictatorial, good or evil.

It means that the morality of an action is based solely on the outcome of that action and not on the action itself. It means that in order to achieve an important aim, it is acceptable to do something bad such as, **“Unfortunately, we’ll have to cut down the forest to make space for the golf course, but I feel the end justifies the means.”**

In our text this evening we see an illustration of what happens when we function by the principle that the end justifies the means. There are no heroes in this story - only sinners. No one looked good – not Isaac, not Rebekah, not Jacob, and not Esau. None are innocent, everyone is guilty of misconduct. But I must caution you . . . it is easy to sit here and look down our spiritual noses at Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. But we must be careful because we are may be more like them than we like to admit.

Look at some of the things we see in this family as a result of believing that the end justifies the means.

- **vv. 1-4** Isaac feels he needs to meet secretly with Esau because he knew that Rebekah would object to Isaac's plan. Esau schemes with his father take back what he has already sold his brother.
- **v. 5** Rebekah eavesdrops on her husband. She was spying on her husband because she didn’t trust him.
- **v. 8** Rebekah and Jacob scheme to deceive their husband and father.
- **v. 19** Jacob tells out and out lies to his father.
- **v. 41** There was animosity between the brothers . . . even threats of murder!
v. 43 There is separation in the family

Jacob got the promised blessing but look at the cost!

First, Isaac’s Decision (27:1-4)

“Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answer-ed him, "Here I am." (2) Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. (3) Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. (4) And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

There seems to be an undercurrent of urgency (at least in Isaac’s mind) he thinks his time is short. You get the feeling that as Debbie’s grandmother use to say he has “one foot in the grave and the other on a ban-ana peel.” But the facts are that Isaac who is 137 years old at this time will live another 43 more years.

But we have to admit that age has begun to affect Isaac, it has left him visually impaired (in fact virtually blind) and dependent on his family. Perhaps most of important here is his decision to circumvent the will of God. Isaac is willing to ignore the Word of God in order to bless his favorite; Esau. It did not matter that Esau was godless man, the he had despised his birth-right, and that he had married not one but two Canaanite women. Esau’s marriages were a deliberate choice, almost certainly made against the counsel of his parents, as well as being against the will of God. Yet Esau was still Isaac’s favorite and he fully intended to give everything to Esau as is revealed in his mistaken blessing to Jacob (27:28-29, 37-38).

Second, Rebekah’s Diversion (27:5-17)

“Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. (6) So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, (7) Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death." (8) Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. (9) Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. (10) Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death." (11) And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. (12) Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing."
But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me."

"Jacob’s fear that his father would think him a ‘deceiver’ needs a little clarification. The word actually means ‘mocker’ and seems to suggest that discovery of the plan by his father would make him seem to seem to be mocking his father’s blindness. This was Jacob’s concern, rather than that his father would think him a liar.” [Henry M. Morris. The Genesis Record. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) p. 433]

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(Verses 14-17)

“And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. (15) Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. (16) And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. (17) Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.”

Rebekah overheard Isaac’s instructions to Esau and quickly put into motion an audacious if not ludi-crous plan. She will substitute Jacob in Esau’s place that he might receive the blessing.

But in order to pass Jacob off as Esau he must look (really feel like – Isaac is virtually blind) and smell like his brother. Esau apparently had a particular smell, the word we might use to describe that smell is “gamey.” If you travel around the world you will discover, that a lot of the world does not share our access to deodorant or the need for frequent baths, you will fairly quickly discover the smell of unwashed bodies.

Third, Jacob’s Deception (27:18-29)

“So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" (19) Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." (20) But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me." (21) Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." (22) So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

(23) And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. (24) Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am."

Jacob’s Three Lies
1st Question (v.18) -“Who are you, my son?”  
The Response (v. 19) "I am Esau your firstborn…”

2nd Question (v. 20) – “How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?”  
The Response (v. 20) "Because the LORD your God brought it to me."

3rd Question (v. 24) -"Are you really my son Esau?"  
The Response (v. 24) He said, "I am."

(Verses 25-29)  
“He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. (26) Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." (27) And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. (28) Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. (29) Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

Jacob deception is successful but the consequences of Jacob’s deception were high indeed. First, all though the blessing stipulated that he would be master over his brother's (v. 29) he would first have to bow before Esau (33:3, 8). Secondly, he would be deceived by his future father-in-law, Laban (Gen. 29-31). Later his own sons would deceive him, telling him that his favorite son, Joseph, had been killed by animals (Gen. 37:32-35) He mourned the death of his son for twenty years before he found out the truth.

Fourth, Esau’s Despair (27:30-41)  
- Isaac’s Realization. (vv. 30-33)  
“Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (31) He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." (32) And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." (33) Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him--and indeed he shall be blessed."
When Esau came into his father, it became quickly apparent to Isaac that he had been duped. Hebrew scholars tell us the language used to describe Isaac reaction “Isaac trembled exceedingly” (v. 33) is very graphic and means something like “Isaac trem-bled most excessively with great trembling.” All kinds of emotion probably flooded over him. Anger; with Jacob about being deceived, Resentment; that his plan had not worked, Concern; for Esau’s future and Grief; over being deceived by his own wife. But perhaps most frightening of all was the realization that God had defeated his plans. He declares of Jacob that though unintentional, “I have blessed him--and indeed he shall be blessed.” (v.33b) Issac declares that he had been defeated and that he recognized Jacob as blessed of God.

- Esau’s Lament (vv. 34-38)

“When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me- me also, O my father!" (35) But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." (36) And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

(37) Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" (38) And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me--me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.”

Esau’s tears make us feel sorry for him. But there is no evidence that this is anything other than sorrow that he did not get what he was after. There seems to be no evidence that there was any real repentance and willingness to do things God’s way. He is like so many of those you will find in the prisons of our country that are full of sorrow, sorry that they got caught and their plans were frustrated. The only real repentance is turning from our selfish pursuits to do what God wants.

It was not true as Esau laments that Jacob took away his birthright (27:36) Esau gave it away. In spite of what happens here it is interesting to note as Henry Morris points out in his commentary that “there is not a single instance in the Bible of criticism of Jacob (except from the lips of Isaac and Laban, both of whom are unworthy witnesses). Every time God speaks to Jacob, it was in a message of blessing and promise, never rebuke of chastisement.”

[Henry M. Morris. p. 428]

- Esau’s Blessing (vv. 39-41)

“Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. (40) By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck." (41) So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing
with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Esau’s descendants would be characterized as being away from the blessing of “fatness of the land” and the “dew of Heaven.” The Edomites would be desert dwellers and live by and for violence “by the sword” (v. 40).

Esau represents everybody in this room who has been done dirty by somebody else; maybe in a business deal, maybe in a family transaction, maybe when your parent’s will was settled, maybe when something was done that you just felt like you got the short end of the stick and you are forever bitter about it. Esau represents those kinds of people. Esau spent the next few years of his life getting more and more bitter and angrier. He was already red. I think he got redder and redder and redder the older he got as he got angrier and angrier. At last he says when I bury my father, then I will bury Jacob.

Fifth, Jacob’s Departure (27:42-44)
“And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you." (43) Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. (44) And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away."

When Rebekah learned of Esau’s threat to kill Jacob she quickly responded by instructing Jacob to leave “for a few days.” Rebekah thought that the whole thing would blow over in a few days and then Jacob could come home. But she was wrong, the few days turned into 20 years and it is likely that she never saw her favorite son again.

If there is one overriding lesson in this story it is - Wrong methods do not become right just because they work.

Was it God’s will for Jacob to inherit the blessing? Absolutely!!! Was then right for Jacob and Rebekah to gain the blessing through deception? No! Methods do matter. Wrong methods do not become right just because they work.

The idea of "the end justifies the means" is simply a smokescreen to keep from admitting our sin. And if we won't admit our sin we can’t know the freedom of His forgiveness.

- We rationalize immoral relationship by saying "but we really love one another."
- We rationalize our materialism with "we just want our kids to have the best."
- We excuse our absence in worship with "Sunday is our family day."
- We tear people down and say, "I was just having joking!"
Sometimes the end justifies the means" way fo thought even finds its way into the church. Let me give some specific examples of what I mean.

Sometimes in our desire to get more people to our churches and activities and we resort to inappropriate means. We water down the gospel so the message will be more attractive. We don't tell people about sin . . . we focus only on God's love. We turn to entertainment or play to emotions to attract people. We tell people what they want to hear: "God wants you to be prosperous, healthy and happy." But in doing so we forget that God is more concerned about character than our comfort. God wants us to come to Him because of who He is . . . and not because of what we can get from Him. We may get more numbers but we are not making disciples!

In our desire to "get decisions" we may manipulate people. We sing “Just As I Am” over and over just in an effort to get them to respond as we desire.

Conclusion

In this story there is a sad lack of confidence in God.

- Isaac knew the blessing was for Jacob but perhaps feeling God was mistaken sought to give him the blessing to Esau.
- Rebekah feels she cannot leave the matter with God but instead concocts a scheme.
- Jacob trusts the scheme rather than the promise.

Do you see the assumptions here? The assumption was that God could not bring to pass what He had promised unless He got some help. Every one of these people panicked. Isaac was afraid his beloved son, Esau would be forgotten, Rebekah was afraid Jacob was going to lose what God promised, Jacob was afraid Esau was going to take his blessing.

Real faith is trusting God no matter what happens. Faith knows that God has a way. Faith knows that even though it may not come now . . . it will come in the proper time.

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Genesis 27:1-47

First, Isaac’s ________________ (27:1-4)
Second, Rebekah’s ____________ (27:5-17)

Third, Jacob’s ______________ (27:18-29)

Jacob's Three Lies
1st (v.19) :"I am ______ your firstborn..."

2nd (v. 20) – "the ______ brought it to me."

3rd (v. 24) -"Yes ....I am really _______?"

Fourth, Esau’s ________ (27:30-41)

• Isaac’s _______________. (v. 30-32)

• Esau’s _______________. (vv. 34-38)

• Esau’s _______________. (vv. 39-41)

Fifth, Jacob’s _______________ (27:42-44)

• You Make A Mess When You Try to Force God's Plan.
• Wrong methods do not become right just because they work.