

Baggage Claim  
Week 1: The Baggage of Pride

I. We're kicking off a new ministry year and a new sermon series, so you picked an awesome day to join!

A. Broadly speaking there are a few different types of people in the world. There're homebodies and there're people who like to travel. How many people would prefer to hit the highway or the airways? Now even in this group there are a few different types of people. Those who travel light and those who travel heavy. I want to say I travel light but I'm not so sure. I'm pretty good on packing light when it comes to clothes, but I obsess a bit about having my laptop and a minimum of 3 books. So, ask my wife Bethany and she might say that I'm not really a light traveler.

B. Here's where I draw the line though, if I'm flying in the continental U.S., I refuse to check baggage. Some of us have had the experience before of going to the baggage claim and 5 minutes turns into 10 minutes. At some point that sinking feeling happens and panic sets in when we realize our baggage is nowhere to be claimed! Yikes! This is not a great situation to be in!

C. When we're traveling with checked baggage we're hoping and praying that we'll be reunited with our baggage at the final destination. Baggage doesn't just come in the form of clothes in a suitcase though. There're other types of baggage when the exact opposite is true. We're doing everything we can to check our baggage, hoping and praying that it never turns back up. This type of baggage refers to the wounds and scars we all experience from past pain or mistakes. Most of us have gone through experiences in our lives that we'd rather cover and run from. Me too! Rather than running from our baggage, I want to challenge us over the next several weeks that God's story doesn't run from our scars:

[Slide]: God's story runs through our scars!

1. This is so huge! Think about God's story as it pertains to the gospel. Through our sin, a gap was created between mankind and God that no matter how much we tried could not be repaired. Rather than walking away, God took on the mess of humanity head on doing for us what we could not do on our own. God took on scars so that we might be healed! That's the God we honor and give praise to!
2. When we consider our sins, our failures, our heartache, do we remember the extent God was willing to go to make us whole in Christ? On the basis of Jesus Christ, we can see that God doesn't shy away from the scars! That's what we're going to dive into over the next several weeks by looking at examples in Scripture of God working through the scars to cultivate men and women for his purposes. Not despite the scars but because of the scars! That's a myth that we must debunk! There's nothing insignificant about sin or pain but here's the goodness of God: God takes our scars and writes a new story! Scripture is saturated with example after example and yet we continue to convince ourselves that we're unworthy or God would never use me in a powerful way because (fill in the blank). It's a lie of Satan because he knows that the opposite is true. The scars are what tell the story!

D. Today we're going to be in Genesis 32 looking at one of the greatest deceivers of all time. Jacob is a man who habitually struggles with a lot of things but generally resulting from a common condition known as:

[Slide]: Pride

1. I like how one dictionary defined pride: the excessive appreciation of one's own worth. Pride is easy to spot in others but difficult to see in ourselves. But Jacob's story is one that after years of God breaking him down, Jacob finally acknowledges his pride and in the humbling is finally prepared to embrace God's promise.
2. Context:
  - a. To appreciate the extent of our passage today we need to backtrack just a bit. Jacob has a bad habit of not ending things well. He has a long trail of broken relationships which tends to happen when we're people consumed with pride. He's been gone from his homeland a longtime because if he goes back

home his brother will likely kill him. Jacob's brother Esau was one in a long line who Jacob had deceived. God had declared that Jacob would receive his father's blessing over his older brother Esau, but Jacob wasn't one to sit back and trust God. Jacob took matters into his own hands (literally) and received the blessing but severed family ties. God had already promised the end product, but Jacob's pride clouded the process. Patience is hard when we're consumed with pride. Patience and humility often go hand in hand.

b. Jacob left his homeland and ended up in the region of Paddan Aram. Here Jacob got a taste of his own medicine and was deceived by his future father-in-law Laban. Laban deceived Jacob in a very similar way that Jacob had used in the past. Despite Jacob's setbacks God continued to bless and that's when we pick up our story.

Genesis 31:1-3 (CSB) [Slide]: 1 Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's and has built this wealth from what belonged to our father." 2 And Jacob saw from Laban's face that his attitude toward him was not the same as before. 3 The LORD said to him, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

c. So, many years later Jacob is still in the land of his father-in-law, God has been faithful, but he's outstayed his welcome. I have a great relationship with my father-in-law but there's been a few seasons of Bethany and I's marriage when we've needed an extended stay at the Pappy Motel. Jacob said he could tell it was time to go from Laban's face. I'm pretty sure I've seen that face before! I know it's time to go when Pappy pulls out the padlock on the fridge! Jacob was picking up on the nonverbal ques, but one major problem was yet to be solved. He couldn't stay in Paddan Aram, but to go back to his homeland meant facing his estranged brother. Talk about being between a rock and a hard place. But Jacob had this incredible promise straight from the mouth of God!

[Slide]: "I will be with you!" -God

3. By now Jacob has surely learned that deception, fueled by pride, is a bad idea and surely, he's learned to trust the Lord? Not so fast!

Genesis 31:20-21 (CSB) [Slide]: 20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, not telling him that he was fleeing. 21 He fled with all his possessions, crossed the Euphrates, and headed for the hill country of Gilead.

a. Some habits are hard to break! Jacob had been given the promise directly from God that God would be with him. God was going to make a way for Jacob to return to his homeland, but Jacob isn't starting off the trip on a great foot. Rather than having the hard conversation with his Father-In-Law, Jacob decides it's a safer bet to sneak off presumably under the darkness of night.

b. Even in exile, despite Jacob's lack of obedience, God has blessed Jacob at every turn. He's living Paddan Aram with large flocks and full family not because Jacob has undercut his Father-In-Law. That's what Laban and his sons think, but go back and read the story. God took Laban's leftovers and did more through Laban's leftovers than what humans can achieve through their best efforts!

[Slide]: We focus on the external obstacles and all the while it's our lack of obedience that poses the greatest threat!

4. God's covenant promises to his people aren't contingent on our circumstances. But pride often convinces us that it is! We look at our circumstances and we look at other people, and pride pulls us into the comparison trap, all the while God has given us his promise and he's provided EVERYTHING necessary to see us through. Our pride keeps us focused on the shoulda, coulda, woulda, while God is waiting for us to obediently step into what is! That's a major theme of the Jacob story and how his pride was constantly getting in the way. God can do more through the "leftovers" than we can do in our best efforts. How many times have we said, "if I just had this job or opportunity or these resources, then I could really make a difference"? That's pride. There's nothing wrong with wanting to grow and seek opportunities, but who are we to put stipulations on God using us to impact the world? Whatever

circumstances we're currently in, we can bank on the reality that God's promises hold true. We might look and see nothing but limitations and leftovers, but God can leverage all things for his glory.

a. We're covering a lot of ground, but after making peace with Laban, Jacob continues on his journey home. Jacob was chosen by God to receive the covenant promise and a part of that promise was the promised land. An interaction between Jacob and his estranged brother Esau was imminent. As Jacob nears the meeting with Esau, Jacob is met by God's angels. It's a tangible reminder from God of the promise: "I will be with you!" Jacob has a great opportunity to proceed in humility knowing God has promised to see him through, but again Jacob's pride clouds his perspective. He starts praying and posturing but not in that order!

Genesis 32:7-12 (CSB) [Slide]: 7 Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; he divided the people with him into two camps, along with the flocks, herds, and camels. 8 He thought, "If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the remaining one can escape."

He's posturing and then comes the prayer.

[Slide]: 9 Then Jacob said, "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper,' 10 I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. 11 Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. 12 You have said, 'I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted.'"

b. Jacob is posturing and praying and it's the reverse compliment sandwich. The compliment sandwich is when you tell someone something nice so you can tell them something hard and then you follow it up with something nice. Jacob has gotten the sandwich reversed, but thankfully God has a healthy self-esteem and can handle it! Jacob's like, "you promised me God that you'd see this through and my brother Esau's coming at me with 400 men. That doesn't sound like you've got this God! Thank you for your kindness and faithfulness in the past God. By the way you said you'd see me through!" Jacob has positioned his family and all his possessions strategically to meet his brother. If it's not good at least some of them will be able to escape. Finally, Jacob sends his most prized possessions his immediate family across the Jabbok River. That's significant because the Jabbok marks the territory of his brother Esau.

c. Here in isolation and in the middle of darkness, Jacob will have to confront the baggage of pride head on. There's no UFC, WWE, or WWF that could hold a stick to this. When it comes to our baggage, we try to suppress, cover, or run away, but it's not until we face it head on that we see God's work through the scars! Jacob's pride convinced him that he could make it happen on his own and God worked with Jacob through his pride up to a certain point. Jacob was now in a position for God to break him down to finally say, "not my will be done, but thy will be done!"

Genesis 32:24-29 (CSB) [Slide]: 24 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. 26 Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 "What is your name?" the man asked. "Jacob," he replied. 28 "Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he answered, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

5. There is a lot happening in this passage, but Jacob, the one who has deceived to get through life and finds himself in a wrestling match with none other than the LORD God. I want to be cautious with my language here, but it's the first instance in scripture of God in a body. God humbles himself to encounter Jacob in a physical wrestling match to deplete Jacob of his remaining pride. We don't know how all these events transpired but here's what we do know:

[Slide]: God wrestled with Jacob on Jacob's level.

- a. God could have wiped Jacob out in an instant but that wasn't the goal. God was stripping Jacob of his remaining self-determination and pride. When enough was enough God touched Jacob's hip and it was dislocated. In this excruciating pain, Jacob continues to cling to God despite the pain and despite the impending daybreak. Jacob realizes he's wrestling with the divine and daybreak is vital. One does not see God and live.

[Slide]: Jacob prevails through prayer!

6. He recognizes he's wrestling with the divine. This is the LORD God and Jacob would rather die than move forward without acknowledging his total loyalty and allegiance to the LORD. Jacob is dependent no longer on his deception and physical ability but wholly on the blessing of the LORD!

- a. After years of struggle and finally getting to the end of his pride Jacob has a new limp but he's also got a new label. No longer is he to be called Jacob or "heal grabber," he's to be called Israel, "the one who wrestles with God and man and prevails." Jacob has a scar, but he's also got a story!

Genesis 32:30-31 (CSB) [Slide]: 30 Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared." 31 The sun shone on him as he passed by Penuel-limping because of his hip.

7. God granted Jacob, turned Israel, a new day and it was more than just a new day. This was a new man with a new identity. He would let go of his pride and lean into the blessing of the LORD. And he would have a physical scar to remind him of the night he finally turned away from his deception and clung to God in order to prevail.

8. Israel would go on to encounter his brother and he would have nothing other than the blessing of the LORD to do so, BUT what better could he have? It's better to limp into a situation with the blessing of the LORD rather than sprint into it with a head full of pride.

Genesis 33:18 and 20 (CSB) [Slide]: 18 After Jacob came from Paddan-Aram, he arrived safely at Shechem in the land of Canaan and camped in front of the city. .... 20 And he set up an altar there and called it God, the God of Israel.

9. God made good on the promise he made to Jacob turned Israel. But it was the scar that remained that told the story of the pride-filled man Jacob to the man Israel. Israel would no longer depend on deception but prevail through his trust in God's blessing.

- E. Praise God that he loves us enough to break us down. One of the most powerful attributes of God is his ability to humble mankind. Maybe today we can resonate with the baggage of pride. Maybe we're frustrated because we feel like we're deserving of something and we're justifying all kind of means to get to an outcome that God has already declared over our lives. Let's take it from Jacob that we can trust God. What we might think is a limitation or a leftover, God can leverage because it's not about us! That's the point! God has declared victory over us because we're in Christ. I'd rather lean into God with a limp, than clinging to my own pride. Pride takes a lot of forms, but always points back to the conclusion:

[Slide]: I know what's best!

- II. The gospel says, God knows what's best and he's demonstrated his trustworthiness by sending Jesus Christ to die in my place and defeat death through resurrection so that I might have eternal life. But it takes humility to say I'm a hopeless sinner in need of salvation. It takes humility to say, "I can't fix my way out of this." When Jacob was finally crippled by his baggage of pride all he could do was turn to God and say, "I'm dependent on your blessing." That's another way of saying I need your favor and grace! "God I cling to you knowing that it's really you clinging to me." I've got scars that tell my story and praise God for them. They've brought me to a place of dependence on the LORD. As the worship team comes back up, the altar is open or if you want to sit or reflect in your space. God wants to work through the scars.