

November 15, 2009 "Don't Be Deceived by Eros"

Genesis 29:21-30

**Background** Last week we saw Jacob and his scheming mother deceive his father/ brother. He duped his dad into giving him the blessing which was intended for his older brother. However, consequences always follow wrongdoing. Jacob has to flee from the wrath of his brother. Returning to his mother's ancestral homeland, he beholds a beautiful young woman, Rachel. It's a definite case of "love at first sight." Daughter of his Uncle Laban (1<sup>st</sup> cousins)

*Now Laban had 2 daughters; the name of the older was Leah, & the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. **Jacob was in love with Rachel** & said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years to get R, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. (Gen 29:16-20)*

C.S. Lewis, the brilliant Englishman who was a convert from atheism to Christianity, wrote in his book, **The Four Loves**, about these 4: They are **Storge** (family), **Philia** (friends) **Agape** (God's love) and **Eros** (sensual, romantic, or "erotic"). He also mentions a 5<sup>th</sup> word, "**Venus**" (the sexual act itself) as being a part of eros. Eros is at the very root of this story. "J's brains fall out." Rachel is beautiful. Laban uses Eros to his advantage over J. J eagerly serves for 7 years to get Rachel. Notice the text: *but they seemed like **only a few days to him** because of **his love** for her.* That's "Eros."

**Bait and Switch** *Then J said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed. I want to lie with her." So Laban brought together all the people of the place & gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. When morning came, **there was Leah!** So J said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have **you deceived me?**" Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work." And J did so. He finished the week with Leah, & then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. J lay with Rachel also, and he **loved Rachel more than Leah.** And he worked for Laban another 7 years. Classic case of "Bait and Switch." What was marketed and promise was not delivered. J must have been pretty smashed to have not known the difference between the 2. The marriage is consummated with an inebriated husband in a darkened tent. The next morning, however, he rolls over & looks at his beautiful new bride. What he sees shocks him to death.*

**Poetic Justice** Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Jacob ("grabby") = tricked himself. The deceiver is deceived. The manipulator meets his match with his Uncle Laban. She shoes on the other foot. It's so ironic that he asks his Uncle, "*Why have you deceived me?*" That's the pot calling the kettle black.

## **Application**

1.) **Eros is Good!** Eros is God-given. Without it, the human race would long ago have ceased. It was Eros that lit the fire for Jacob, and fostered within him this burning desire for Rachel.

2.) Eros has its **Proper place**. **Hebrews 13:4** *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”*

3.) Eros often **blinds us to deception**. We read this week the story in **2 Samuel 11** (David & Bathsheba). Like fire, which can cook your dinner or burn your house down, Eros can bring people together in loving unity or can destroy people. Her husband, Uriah, was murdered because of D’s lust. He died because of another man’s desire.

4.) **Consequences** follow. Until 2 Samuel 11, D could do no wrong. Now the wheels fell off. Confronted, repented, and forgiven (Psalm 51), but he blew up his family. His sons were in rebellion against him. One son raped his half-sister. Palace gossip impacted David’s reputation & maligned his character. By having multiple wives, he became a “multiple” father. His life = toxic. God = not pleased. Not blessed but cursed. “IF ONLY...” Regrets

**Proverbs 6:23-33** describes the possible consequences on a man who engages in a sexual relationship outside of marriage: *For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house. But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.*

Sexual sin - incredible impact! The scriptures warn/illustrate. We all know stories about others who have been adversely affected by poor choices in this way. “**The Death of a Salesman**” Arthur Miller’s play had a huge impact upon me. We see how the poor choices of a father not only diminished, it virtually destroyed the respect the son had for his father.

In this story, consider the perspective of Leah. The text said she had “weak eyes.” I guess that means she wasn’t a “good looker.” She might have been acceptable, but not when compared to a real beauty like her sister, Rachel. Jacob did not intend to hurt her. He was tricked. He didn’t hate Leah, but he didn’t love her, either. Laban knew the only way he was going to be able to unload her was to deceive someone. Imagine the damage on her. This had to have impacted her self-esteem. She gave herself fully. But, her brand new husband runs from the tent screaming. This is total rejection for her. Even though she was the oldest girl, she knew she wasn’t the one who was desired. Even though she was “first,” she was really in a distant second in comparison with her rival. We’ve seen these generational patterns of parental favoritism and sibling rivalry. Jacob is right in the middle of all of it. First he was a son, then a brother, now a husband, and soon to be a father. He is drowning in family dysfunction. Once he gets married, the battle of the dueling wombs perpetuates this dysfunctional family.

### 5.) Eros is only one of 4 Loves.

Our culture is so deeply obsessed with sexuality that it's important to state that this is only one of 4 "loves" in the Bible. American culture seems to have only "Eros."

Many singles think: "If only I could have sex (or a partner) my life would be better." Maybe your life would be better. But what price are you willing to pay? Yes, "Venus" is a wonderful thing. But if it's not shared within the proper context, you'll feel far worse afterwards about yourself and about God than you did before. You don't have to have sex to experience love. "Eros" "Storge," "Philia," or "Agape." Because you do not have "Eros" does not mean you are an inferior human being. I don't think the John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul or Jesus (all single adults) lived without meaningful lives! In fact, there are significant advantages for Kingdom purposes to being single. John Wesley got married – but it was a terrible mistake for him to do so! Remember the saying, "Your greatest strength can be your greatest weakness." Eros, can be a great strength. It can also be a great weakness. Not everyone is called to Eros. Also, I'd remind you that Eros takes WORK. Jacob had to work 14 years – but whenever Eros is involved, it's going to mean you have to pay attention to another person, not just yourself.

If married, I remind you of the same truth. Mature in your love. You can't build a long-term relationship just on Eros. Eros can be beautiful in its right place but your love has to grow deeper. It's not intended to stand alone. And in this culture, sexual expectations are often unrealistic. Movies and romantic books often portray relationship in certain ways that are pure fantasy. Try to balance out your relationship with your spouse.

God gave us this gift is good news. Within its proper context we are to enjoy and celebrate it.

While Eros is a good thing, it also fuels a lot of temptations. The Bible teaches that people who engaged in sex before marriage (fornication), in adultery, in living together outside of marriage, or in homosexuality, sin. Everything gets messed up. Any message today on sexuality would be incomplete if I didn't mention the problem of our culture with pornography. Lots of people are being burned because of it. It's so easy, so convenient, and so readily available. They have been & are still being burned.

Like the original sinners, we end up deceived, and we have to live with the consequences.

There is: "Good News – Bad News – Good News." If I'm someone with a problem in this area – someone who is a victimizer or a victim, a person who's been married & divorced, a person dealing with homosexual feelings, a person living together outside of marriage, a person who is hooked on pornography.... We offer Good News! We have a savior. We all need it, too, because we are all sinners. Just as King David was forgiven, so can we. We may still have to live with the consequences of our actions, but at least we can stop making things worse. And we can make things better by admitting our sin and accepting the Agape Love of God. Life brings us into relationship with others, too (Philia). We have a particular ministry called "Celebrating Recovery" which meets on Monday nights (check out our website) which helps people with "hurts, habits, and hang-ups."

The bottom line is: Agape is an empowering love which introduces the Holy Spirit into our lives to lead us out of bondage and into a right way of life. Give yourself to Him. Open your hearts wide to His presence. He will lead you where you need to go.