

The time had come for the old man. His life was quickly ending and he needed to ensure that his earthly possessions were passed on to his oldest son. Unable to see he relied on other senses. He felt for the hairy arms of his older son. He tasted the wild animal prepared just as he liked it. He smelled like his oldest son. The voice wasn't quite right but it had to be him. So he gave the one serving him the blessing of the firstborn. It included so much more than property and servants.

The older son came walking in. He smelled right, felt right, and had wild animal prepared just right. But there was no blessing left. The younger had stolen it from the older. Weeping aloud the older couldn't stand the sight of his younger brother. And for the next twenty years he wouldn't see him. Probably good, he was so mad who knows what he would've done. The younger had every reason to worry.

Circumstances surrounding Jacob had escalated out of control. Esau would kill him he just knew it. Worry was natural. Jacob lived what we know too. We don't always have control over our personal situations and we don't always have options. Worry is natural. But in the first lesson we come to that moment, twenty years later, when Jacob must see his brother for the first time since stealing the blessing. Twenty years, was that enough for his brother to feel better, to not be so angry, or to not want to kill him? The first lesson from Genesis shows us the conclusion. It also tells us something about our life. We have...

**No reason to worry  
Make your prayers  
Make your plans**

It's the kind of no-win situation that we worry about. Pay your taxes or face penalties and jail time. Pay lots of money to fix what needs fixing in the house or wait and pay more later when things really break. It's the back against the wall, no other options kind of decision. God commanded Jacob to return to his homeland. Esau was coming to meet him with 400 fighting men. He couldn't disobey God, but he didn't want to run into his brother and get into a bloody fight either. Now the worry set in.

We know all too well that emotion, worry. For some it's the default setting when you wake up. From the moment our feet hit the floor problems big and small confront us. Someone's running a fever. Who can run to the doctor? What if the doctor finds something worse? The to-do list didn't get done yesterday. So things are already behind today. Things will only be added that are more time consuming. The retirement accounts are starting to look a little thin. When will this recovery actually happen? What if they never recover and the money runs out? Who will care for us then? Worry leads to despair. Or worry leads to false self confidence. Either way we're riding the worry rollercoaster into sin.

After the shock of what the messengers said wore off it may not have been the first thing he did but it certainly was the most important. Jacob prayed. He took his problems to the Lord and trusted God would do something about them. **"O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper.'" Jacob couldn't help but be reminded of the promises that were made to him and his ancestors. That promise of the Messiah that both Abraham and Isaac passed down to him. He was the carrier now of that promise. Not that he was worthy. "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness..." He could have just as easily said mercy and love. That's what Jacob received from God. Time after time Jacob had done things deserving punishment...remember stealing the birthright. But time after time he received grace from God and mercy instead. Jacob never forgot it and he was thankful.**

Are you worrying like Jacob? Return to the promises of God in your life like Jacob. Review the history of God's mercy in your life. Then make your prayers based on those promises. Your Messiah has come. God's showing his mercy and love to you. Jesus helps by reminding you about simple things like clothing and food. You've had the food and clothes you need, more and better than the birds of the air or the lilies of the field. God's mercy is seen in food and clothes. But God's mercy is seen in more than that. It's God's grace and mercy in Jesus that relieves the worry, cures the despair, and brings down your self confidence. Jesus gets you off that rollercoaster of worry that leads to sin. He does it by taking it away with his own death and resurrection.

Now based on the promises of God and his undeserved mercy, he invites you to the most important thing, pray to him. It might not be the first thing, but with God's help and focused on Christ we can make it the first thing more often. He's promised to answer so we'd be foolish not to take him up on it. When we worry prayer can be the first thing that we think to do. Motivated by the love of Jesus we can cry out to him what he already knows but loves to hear anyway. Christ has opened the line to God and invites us to have no worries and make our prayers before him.

Predictably worry entered your life. But motivated by Christ you responded the right way and went to your heavenly Father in prayer. Based on his mercy in Jesus you asked for him to take away your worry. And you waited. And waited and wondered. Why wasn't God acting? Where was the miracle? Where was the divine intervention? But you forgot the other truth illustrated by Jacob. God hears and answers prayers, but that doesn't excuse us from making plans and taking action.

Jacob had no idea how his brother was going to react. He never heard from his mother like she promised. That could only mean one thing he reasoned, Esau was still mad. His messengers were supposed to smooth the way, but things were getting worse. An angry Esau would soon arrive and there was no telling what he would do. The time had come to act. **"In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well."** Esau would likely only attack one. That would give the other time and opportunity to escape. It really was a smart plan, unnecessary, but smart.

Right now you might be worried about the budget. It was set up with certain assumptions. But maybe those assumptions are all falling apart. In worry you wrestle control as best you can of the situation. You'll set things up in the hopes it will get better. You'll master this problem. You'll bring about the change needed and get things going right. Before you know it worry has so clouded your minds that you can't even see others who are willing to help much less God. Sin cuts God out of your life that you don't care what he can do or what he wants to do.

The fear and distress make it seem that Jacob was taking action apart from God. But maybe he was taking action because of God. God gave him the smarts to make such a decision. God put him in this situation and gave him the faith to take action. God lead and strengthened Jacob just the way he wanted. Jacob made his decision and took action. His actions would be small in comparison but the results were left to God. He made his plans and trusted in the Lord.

Taking action for us needs the same proper perspective. Our action starts by looking at Christ's action. His going to the cross changed the course of our life forever. It took away us having to master our own problems. It cleared up the worry so we could see God in control. Jesus brought God back into our lives so our sin would no longer rule us. This action by Christ Jesus is most important. Remembering this often and letting it penetrate us is necessary so we remember who controls our lives and everything around us. **"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** Look for forgiveness, faith, and power from the Holy Spirit. With these your actions will be guided properly by the Lord.

Prayer requires a willingness to take action. Be ready to have God work through you. Don't be surprised when God answers your prayer in you and through you. The things that worried you are the very things God can use to strengthen your faith. Part of building up is using you as part of the solution. So after you make your prayers you can make your plans under God's grace, guidance, and mercy because there's no reason to worry.