

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see... [Jacob] went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

We didn't hear the end of the story in this reading.

Isaac's eyes, being dim, he relies on all his other senses.

He hesitated to believe his hearing. He says, "**The voice is Jacob's voice, but...**"

He bids his son to come and feels the hair on his arms. "... **but the hands are the hands of Esau.**"

He tastes the delicious food, such as he loves ... that Rebekah made.

He smells the fields that the Lord has blessed in Esau's clothing.

And so blesses the son before him with all the blessings of the Lord.

No sooner had Jacob left than Esau came in to receive the blessing.

But Isaac is full of food, and empty on blessings.

Isaac's joy in bestowing his blessing upon the one he presumed to be his favorite son, turns to violent trembling when he realizes that Esau is the son that stands before him now.

And this is where the whole story reaches its turning point;

the moment that the roller coaster, after gradually climbing up with so much effort, reaches its zenith and gravity starts rocketing it down in seemingly chaotic twists and turns.

All the deception is now revealed and the truth comes to light.

Esau, who had previously despised and sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew, who still so eagerly coveted that blessing that he didn't correct his father's invitation, he was left with nothing, except the ominous saying,

"Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be...

By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother." Gen.27:39-40

Esau desired to see that prophecy come true quickly, not the **serving your brother** part, but the **living by the sword** part, as he plotted to kill Jacob after Isaac died.

(Of course, Isaac didn't die for another 40 years.)

Rebekah, who devised the whole grand deception, thinking of every detail and who was willing to take the curse upon herself so that her favorite son might have the opportunity to receive the blessing no matter how underhanded or crooked it came about.

She would be left without seeing that favorite son again, this side of heaven.

Upon hearing of Esau's plot to kill Jacob, she insists that Isaac send him to her family.

Jacob will not return to Canaan for another 20 years, in which time Rebekah would be buried.

Jacob, the passive yet active deceiver, who is wary, not of deceiving his father, but of receiving a curse, who kills the goats, dons their skin, wears Esau's good clothes, steals his brother's identity,

lies straight to his father's face, and receives the blessing under false pretenses, that Jacob would have to flee for his life to a strange and foreign land with nothing but a staff.

Sure, the blessing was given to him,

but who can feel confident about such a blessing received so deceptively.

And Isaac. There he trembled violently.

Not because he was afraid of Esau's anger or wrath.

Nor because he had blessed the "wrong son."

It was because he was willingly and defiantly attempting to bless the wrong son, and he was afraid of God's anger and wrath.

Though Rebekah and Jacob deceived him, he could not deceive the Lord.

He had tried to usurp God's spiritual authority for his own satisfaction.

He tried to give God's blessings to one who despised them.

When it turned out that Jacob, the one that God had previously revealed was to be blessed, was indeed blessed, Isaac knew immediately that he had been caught.

You know this feeling. Your hand has been caught in the cookie jar.

Your words have been heard by the wrong person.

Your brother now knows what you did to cheat him.

Your father found your secret texts. Your mother overheard you lie to your father.

Your children point out the favoritism, trying to compete for your love and affection.

You have known what is good, right, and salutary in the Lord's eyes,

but you neglect it for **the delicious foods that you love, that look pleasing to the eye.** Genesis 3

The guilt and fear, those spiritual feelings, take on physical form.

What was pleasing to the eye is now sour and churning in the pit of your stomach.

Your mouth dries up. Your face goes pale. The end of the line has come.

The consequences become very real. The joy you thought you would gain gives way to trembling.

A depression sets in. Even the taste of delicious food no longer pleases you.

Where God's Word did not seem so important before,

when you thought you could get away with your tricks and deceptions,

now you fear that Word because it condemns you, and you know its truth and power.

Where you sought to make your life better, to receive a blessing from the Lord,

even if through dishonest or devious means,

now you realize that you have forfeited your life and should, in fact, receive a curse.

Do you suppose that Mary and Joseph probably had guilt as they searched for Jesus?

"I knew I should have made sure He was with us. All I had to do was tell Him to find me.

But I was having such an interesting conversation with Ruth.

How could I have been so negligent, so absent-minded?"

"What if something has happened to Him? Can God forgive me for losing His Son?"

But when relief over seeing Him among the teachers of the Law overwhelms her,

Mary changes her tone and seeks to shift the blame, "**Son, why have you done this to us?**"

As if to say, "This is Your fault. How could you?"

But the revealing of our faults and guilt, though it hurts and scares, is a good thing.

Though Mary would blame Jesus, she knew it was her responsibility to guard and keep Him.

And His simple questions, "**Why were you looking for Me?**

Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"

gently showed her that He was fulfilling His vocation, even if she wasn't.

It was wrong to blame the Son of God for her negligence, and so she could confess her sin honestly and then receive God's forgiveness confidently.

When Jacob deceived his father, he made the words doubtful in his own mind,
though they were always true.
Receiving a blessing under false pretenses doesn't give confidence that the blessing is truly given.
So it is when we would come to God's house and deceptively confess our sins.
Going through the motions so that everyone else sees us doing it,
but not really considering that we are in God's presence speaking to Him,
bearing our guilt and shame before the Judge of all the earth.
Confessions said in such a way can make the absolution given by the Lord's minister
seem cheap, unreal, unimportant, even doubtful.
Then coming to church, taking part in the Divine Service seems less important,
seems like a big deception that I am putting on for other people so they think I am a good person.

But, of course, only you know if this is what is happening to you. Well, you and God.
And sometimes we even try to deceive ourselves. Sometimes we even succeed.
But do not be deceived, God is not mocked. ^{Galatians 6:7} He sees your heart.
He knows your guilt, just like He knew Isaac's, Esau's, Rebekah's, Jacob's and Mary's.
And He reveals that guilt to you so that you may repent of it, confess it,
and let the blessing that He would impart to you, the words of Absolution,
give you complete comfort, joy, and confidence.

After Jesus showed Mary that He was **about His Father's business**, being **in His Father's house**,
learning His Word, fulfilling His vocation as **the Lord our Righteousness**,
Mary pondered all these things in her heart.
She could receive this gentle rebuke with thanks as she freely confessed her sins and knew that
not only where her sins forgiven,
but also that Jesus' was earning her righteousness for her.
She could be completely honest with God about her sins and still receive His blessing of forgiveness.

This is your blessing too. You don't need to come to your Father's house in hopes to deceive anyone.
We all know why you are here. You come to receive forgiveness for your tricks and deceptions.
For your lies to God, to others, and, let's be honest, to yourself.
We are all here for the same reason, because we need Jesus to reveal to us that He is here too,
in His Father's house going about His Father's business,
no longer earning our righteousness (because He did that 2,000 years ago),
but He is here giving His righteousness to you in the declaration of the forgiveness of your lies.
Just as He would later speak to Jacob during his flight away from Esau,
and confirm the blessing that Isaac had spoken upon him in the Lord's name,
Jesus is here now, confirming the blessing, the forgiveness, that He gave to you in your Baptism.
He has suffered and died on the cross as the Passover Lamb.
And now He gives you His body and blood, to eat and to drink in the bread and wine,
so that you, hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
may be filled with the delicious foods such as your blood-bought soul loves.

Your Savior takes off the deceptive rags of Esau, and clothes you in His honesty and righteousness.
It is as if the Father's eyes were dim and He cannot see,
because while He hears the voice of the deceptive son,
He feels the nail pierced hands of His only-begotten Son,
He ignores it and smells the sweet aroma of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God,
and blesses you anyway with the blessing and inheritance of His favored Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria