

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



Climbing Jacob's ladder

Esau was so angry about being deceived by Jacob that he was determined to kill his only brother. "Jacob may have stolen my birthright and received father's blessing," he cried angrily, "but someday soon he will pay for this. When father dies, I will get rid of Jacob forever!"

Esau told everyone of his plans for revenge and even his mother heard of them. So Rebekah convinced her husband, Isaac, that Jacob should go at once to visit her brother, Laban. "I don't want Jacob to marry pagan women as Esau has done. It is best that he go to Haran, so he can choose a wife from among our own people."

A few days later, Jacob was gone from Canaan. Both he and his mother grieved for many days over the real reason for his hasty departure.

It was nearly a week's journey to Haran. When night fell the first day, Jacob found a place to camp in the wilderness with only a rock on which to rest his head. He fell quickly to sleep and had a very strange dream. A huge ladder reached all the way from the earth into heaven. Angels were continually going up and down the ladder, and when Jacob looked up the ladder, he saw God standing at the top!

"I am the God of Abraham and of your father, Isaac," the Lord said to him. "Do not be afraid for your life. I will protect you so that you can return safely here. For I am going to give you the land you are lying on and you will have many descendants who will inherit this land."

The next morning, Jacob took his stone headrest and used it to build an altar to God. He named the place "Bethel," which means "God's House," because he was certain that God had spoken to him there.

Then Jacob prayed, "O Lord, I am sorry for stealing from Esau. If you will bring me back safely to my father's house, I will return to this very spot and worship you. And I shall serve you all of the days of my life."

As Jacob continued on his way, he became filled with peace. When he arrived in Haran, Jacob inquired of some shepherds who were watering their sheep at the well. "Do you know Laban and his family?" They are relatives of mine."

"Of course, Laban is a wealthy man," one of the shepherds replied.

"And here comes one of Laban's daughters now to water the sheep," the other man said, motioning toward a young woman approaching.

When Jacob introduced himself to her

and Rachel learned that they were cousins, she brought him back to her father's house to stay. After Jacob had stayed with his relatives for more than a month, Laban felt it was time to talk business with his nephew. "You are a great deal of help with my flocks, but I cannot just allow you to work for nothing. What do you require for wages?"

Jacob blushed slightly before answering his uncle. Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and they were both beautiful. But Jacob had loved Rachel from their very first meeting. "You don't have to pay me any wages, Uncle Laban," he said slowly. "I will work for you for seven years if you will allow me to marry Rachel!"

Laban quickly agreed, especially since he hated to part with any of his money. After the seven years had passed, Jacob went to his uncle and announced, "The time has come for my marriage to Rachel. I have fulfilled my agreement with you."

All of the citizens of Haran were invited to the wedding celebration, since Laban was a wealthy man. After the ceremony, Jacob watched as his bride took off the long veil that had hidden her face. And then he saw that he had been married to Leah, Rachel's older sister!

"How could you trick me like this?" Jacob cried angrily. "I have labored for nothing and now you have duped me out of my promised recompense!" And then Jacob remembered how he had deceived Esau, and he wept bitterly. "I have paid well for my sin against my brother," he thought to himself.

When Laban saw how upset Jacob was, he explained, "I am sorry; it is not customary to marry off a younger sister first. But if you agree to stay here and work for another seven years," he said slyly, "I will allow you to marry Rachel, too, in one week's time." In those days, it was the custom for men to have more than one wife.

Many years had now passed since Jacob had left his family in Canaan. He had two wives and many children of his own. But even so, he still missed his mother and father. Most of all, he was troubled about the bad feelings with his brother, Esau.

One day, as Jacob prayed, the Lord spoke to him, "It is time to return to your father's house. Go and do not be afraid, for I am with you." So after 20 years, Jacob prepared to return to Canaan and make peace with his brother.

Scripture reference: Book of Genesis, chapters 28-33.

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



The quality of mercy

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 18:21-35; (R1) Sirach 27:30-28/7; (R2) Romans 14:7-9.

Last week we saw that chapter 18 of Matthew's Gospel is the second half of booklet four. Like the fourth book of Moses, the Book of Numbers, chapter 18 is Matthew's "book of numbers."

Numbers played an important part for Matthew in gathering together the various sayings of Jesus. Once gathered, he organized them around two themes: children and brothers.

Thus the discourse in chapter 18 falls into two parts, each of which ends in a parable. The first part concerns children — "unless you become like little children" (18:1-9) — and ends in a parable on the lost sheep — "a little one straying" (18:10-14). The other part concerns brothers — fraternal correction (18:15-20) — and ends with another parable on forgiving an erring brother (18/21-35). This part is Sunday's Gospel.

Matthew begins the parable on forgiveness with a question posed by Peter. Matthew, you see, was very much concerned about pointing out that Peter is the head of the Church. Having asserted the authority of the local church to bind and to loose, Matthew immediately brings Peter back into the picture, lest we forget his role within the larger Church.

Of the four Gospels, only Matthew's records this parable. The unforgiving servant is the central figure and, although he is the villain in the piece, we at first sympathize with him.

He is a court official — one of several who has to give an account of taxes collected. The sum is in the millions, and there is no way he can ever come up with the money. He pleads for mercy, and he gets it — no questions asked. Unexpectedly and undeservedly, he is free!

Leaving that harrowing experience behind, he meets a peer, who owes him a sum paltry in comparison — one that could easily be liquidated. He displays to his debtor the same anger the king had shown toward him, and the debtor makes the exact same plea the servant had made to the king. In the Greek, to heighten the irony, both pleas are the same: "Don't be angry with me. I'll repay you (all)." But here the likenesses stop. The king was merciful; this man is not! He throws his fellow official in jail.

Their peers look on in sheer amazement. Naturally, they report the incident to the king. Infuriated, he asks, "Should you not have dealt mercifully, as I dealt with you?"

Like every parable, this one tells us something of God and challenges us to do as God does. God is like the king. He forgives us for the asking. For one measly look of pity, the thief on the cross stole paradise.

Thus, Jesus taught us to forgive others as God forgives us.

We always measure the gravity of an offense by the status of one offended. Sin offends God, and God is infinite. Our neighbors injure us, but we are finite. Every offense against us is paltry compared to sin against God. Yet God forgives our huge debts; how much more ought we to forgive the far lesser ones against us! That's the point of the parable.

An unforgiving attitude towards others is sheer stupidity. A man was plodding along a country road, carrying a heavy sack on his back. A farmer drove by with a horse and wagon. Seeing the man toiling under his heavy load, the farmer offered him a ride. The man accepted and climbed in the back of the wagon. A few moments later, the driver turned around to see if his passenger was comfortable. He was startled to see that the man was standing with the sack still strapped on his back. The astonished driver asked, "Why don't you set your sack down? The horse and the wagon are going to carry it anyway, why not let them do the work?"

It is just as stupid to gunnysack our hurts through life. Life will go on with or without our gunnysacks. When we do not forgive and forget, we carry needless burdens that encumber and impede our spiritual journey.

In the Old Testament, Joseph's brothers did him wrong in a monumental way. He could have embraced his wrath and anger and become a cold, icy, unforgiving man. Instead, Joseph saw God's hand in his life and became one of the greatest saints of the Old Testament, expressing love in the highest way by forgiving and forgetting forever all wrongs done him.

There are two other reasons why an unforgiving spirit is supremely stupid. First, it is un-Godlike. One of the oft-repeated phrases of the Old Testament is, "Merciful and generous is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness" (Sunday's response). Secondly, if we are unforgiving, we destroy the bridge over which we ourselves must pass. In the course of justice, who of us would see salvation? All of us need mercy, yet it shall be meted out to us in the measure we mete it out to others. Do we not ask God to forgive us as — in the measure that — we forgive others?

How right Shakespeare was when he wrote, "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven . . . It is twice blessed: it blesses him who gives and him who receives."

Memory is a wonderful gift of God. Use it to remember only lovely things. Forget the ugly!

Young, single mothers group sets weekend at Kamp Koinonia

Mothers Together, a Christ-centered support group for young, single mothers and their children, is planning a weekend visit to Kamp Koinonia, near Naples, from September 18 to 20.

Participating mothers and children will be

transported and lodged at no cost to themselves. Volunteers will staff a child-care center while mothers attend various activities.

For information, call Pam Malthaner at (716)544-8667 or 266-4726.

St. Mary's Hospital schedules special day for Seton members

To celebrate the 82 years of service Seton volunteers have given to St. Mary's Hospital, the hospital staff has planned a Seton Women's Day for Wednesday, September 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The morning's events will begin with a welcome from Sister Eileen Kinnarney, chairman of the board, and Patrick Madden, president of St. Mary's. The agenda will include a demonstration on the art of decorative garnishes for food and a demonstration on fall flower arrangements by Marilyn Schickler, a member of the new Seton Branch #87.

In addition to the demonstrations, Annabella Pugliese, director of volunteers, will talk about the role of volunteerism at St. Mary's. Seton members will also be treated to tours of the newly renovated hospital, its many ambulatory services and the sisters' house behind the hospital.

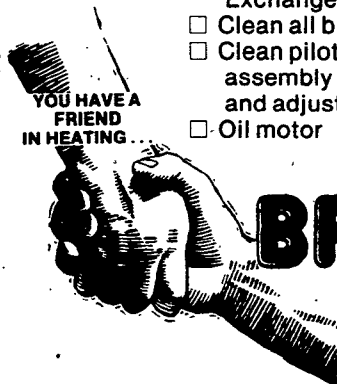
Women interested in attending the program are asked to call the Volunteer Office at (716) 464-3255 to make reservations. No fee for the day will be asked and complimentary parking will be available.

Save Energy and \$\$\$ FURNACE SERVICE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean heat Exchanger | <input type="checkbox"/> Check and adjust thermostat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean all burners | <input type="checkbox"/> Check belts & filters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean pilot assembly and adjust flame | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean smoke pipe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oil motor | <input type="checkbox"/> Check and adjust all controls |

\$32⁹⁵

Senior Citizen DISCOUNT



BRANDT HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

237 Winton Road North

• Established 1934

Your Friends For Over
54 YEARS

☆ 24 HOUR
Emergency Service

288-4270

If You're In The Market For A New Or Used Truck Or Van...
GO WITH A PRO!



HOSELTON CHEVROLET Truck/Van Center

909 Fairport Rd. 586-7373