

March 25th

Genesis 25

Hymn 46 *Most glorious Lord*

Today's hymn is the Scottish metrical version of Psalm 68, dating from 1650, but originally from the time of John Knox around 1564, just after the Scottish Reformation. A Psalm of victory, it may have been used after battle or in a triumphal procession. Hence it is quoted in Ephesians 4:8 with reference to Jesus' ascension.

1 Most glorious Lord, you have gone up
to take your place on high;
as victor, you in triumph led
captive captivity.

2 Blest be the Lord who carries us
and keeps us day by day;
in God and God alone we find
salvation's surest way.

3 God is the God who freely gives
his people life and breath;
God saves and shelters, rescues us
from danger and from death.

Here it is sung to the tune 'Sheffield':

<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/46-most-glorious-lord-you-have-gone-up>

Graham Kendrick has a modern version of the first few verses of the Psalm:

<https://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/songs/graham-kendrick-songs/let-god-arise/let-god-arise>

Today's reading is

Genesis 25: The death of Abraham

Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Ashurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanok, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's sons

This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.

These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers

according to their settlements and camps. Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go towards Ashur. And they lived in hostility towards all the tribes related to them.

Jacob and Esau

This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, 'Why is this happening to me?' So she went to enquire of the Lord.

The Lord said to her,

'Two nations are in your womb,

and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,

and the elder will serve the younger.'

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game,

loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob,

'Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!'

(That is why he was also called Edom.)

Jacob replied, 'First sell me your birthright.'

'Look, I am about to die,' Esau said. 'What good is the birthright to me?'

But Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.' So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Sibling rivalry- it's as old as time. In her book aptly called *'Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins'*, Elizabeth Stone writes: *'Our family stories have a secret power: they play a unique role in shaping our identity, our sense of our place in the world. They give us values, inspirations, warnings, incentives. We need them. We use them. We keep them. They reverberate throughout our lives, affecting our choices in love, work, friendship, and lifestyle.'*

The story of Jacob and Esau reminds us how our relationships and decisions can have powerful consequences, either for good or for ill. The history of the Jewish and Arab peoples since that time is a sobering testimony to that. It also reminds us not to 'despise our birthright'. Whatever our family history is, there are always things we should treasure and give thanks for.

Prayer from *Christianity Today*

1. For the sick and infected: *God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.*
2. For our vulnerable populations: *God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease.*
3. For the young and the strong: *God, give them the caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.*
4. For our governments: *God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.*
5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: *God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.*

A prayer from the Moderator for the coronavirus

emergency: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/a-prayer-from-the-moderator-amid-the-coronavirus-outbreak>