

## Families - who'd have 'em?

- The things that go on in families...
  - I knew a family where the parents didn't really approve of their daughter's choice of husband, where there has been on-going ill-feeling, where the parents were banned from seeing their grand-child (living in the same city) because trust had broken down to such an extent;
  - I knew a family where the son has never completed anything, but has flitted from one thing to another, ever since he left school nearly 20 years ago; he's always got a new job, a new project, a new house - and his parents were nearly daft with worry about his future;
  - in Motherwell, I came away from a funeral visit once feeling like I'd been wading through hatred and vitriol!
- I'm sure you know of many families where things have gone wrong, where relationships are not what they should be, where people can behave abominably!
- Families - who'd have 'em?
  - or even, people - who'd have 'em?
  - and the answer to that is God'll have them!!

## Isaac's Dysfunctional Family

- There are many good reasons why God could have been excused for having nothing to do with Isaac and his dysfunctional family:
  - A weak father who broke the first rule of parenthood and had a favourite child (25:28). It seems that Isaac's favouritism of Esau was partly inspired by his stomach!
    - all been there, been weak, let our standards slip...
  - A manipulative mother who was always in the background pulling the strings of her family... It was Rebekah who eavesdropped on her family (27:5), hatched the deception (27:6-17) and was still pulling the strings as the episode ends (27:42-45).
    - have we not all been there too, trying to get people to do things so events turn out as we want them to?
  - An elder son who couldn't care less about the customs of God's people or his responsibilities as the first-born (25:29-34). We can probably take his prima donna-like "I am about to die of hunger" as a bit OTT!
    - all been there, putting ourselves first and God a long way second...
  - A younger son who was a blackmailer (25:31,32), schemer, robber and liar (27:6-29). In his web of deceit he could even blaspheme, claiming the Lord had given him success in his hunting (27:20).
    - and yes, we've all been there - self first, and sod the rest
- That's the kind of family we want to avoid in daily life!
  - tell our kids to have nothing to do with!
  - complain to the council when they move them in next door!

## Such Good Beginnings!

- But it had all started so well...
  - a devout husband, Isaac, praying for his wife, that she could have children;
  - a wonderful answer to his prayers!
  - a woman unable to have children miraculously gives birth!
  - a "double blessing" of twins!
- Even with such good beginnings, this family had walked away from God's will:
  - but in spite of all this, God still chose Isaac's family as the means through which his plan of salvation would eventually be fulfilled!
  - weak Isaac and scheming Jacob were crucial players in God's plans
  - they would become giants in the history of God's people and be revered as fathers of the faith
- They were not barred from "ministry" by their inadequacies

- their weaknesses and sins did not disqualify them from God's plans
- he chose them despite their failings, not because of their successes
- ...and then he worked on them!

## Conclusion

- God still chooses people to serve him in the same way, despite our sin, not because of our goodness.
  - we have started well - made by God, and with a new life given to us as we welcome Jesus Christ into our lives as Saviour and Lord and become Christians...
  - but we've all then failed to live up to that new life, letting God and each other down in a myriad different ways
- But God still chooses people to serve him despite our sin, not because of our goodness.
- This is a liberating truth:
  - it means that in God's plans there is a future for those with a past
  - the guilty are not just forgiven, but have a positive place in God's plans...
  - ...a place no one else can take!
- **Story:**
  - *A young man had been arrested yet again for petty theft and drunkenness. And, yet again, his father went to the police station and bailed him out. The next day his neighbour said to him, "Why do you keep coming to his rescue? He should learn to take responsibility. If he were my son, I wouldn't take him back."*
  - *"Yes," said his friend, "if he were your son nor would I; but he's not your son, he's mine...."*
- God is our Father; his commitment to us is absolute; Jesus' death for us is ample evidence of that!
  - so we can worship him, for taking us as we are;
  - so we can worship him, for working even through our sinfulness to achieve his greater purposes!
  - so we can entrust ourselves - and our families - to him, in the confidence that he can make something out of even our families!