

Corn In The Midst Of The Beans

Galatians 6:7: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Near my house there is a farmer's field and he planted corn there last year.

Corn has a tendency to reduce the amount of nitrogen that is in the soil, so you need to rotate in a different crop the following year.

One plant that actually adds nitrogen to the soil is a soybean. It is not uncommon for farmers to rotate the soybeans and corn in consecutive years.

Agricultural scientists talk about farming techniques in terms of their "yield." That is, how many bushels of corn do you get from an acre of land?

Adding the soybeans to the field increases the yield of the corn the following year. In fact a study by the University of Iowa found that continuously rotating soybeans and corn would increase the yield on the corn by over 50%. (The corn does not help the soybean yield, however.)

The downside of this process is that sometimes the seeds from one year hang on to the next. This has happened to this particular field this year. In the field full of soybeans there are many stalks of corn growing up in their midst.

I thought this was funny to see the stalks of corn sticking up in the middle of the soybean field. The corn looks so incongruous in the field, these red tufts sticking up in an otherwise field of low green bushes.

I started to wonder, "What do they do with the corn? Do they throw it away? Do they pick it by hand and then harvest the soybeans by machine?" That is when I felt the Lord speaking to me.

Moses was an ordinary guy walking in the desert with some sheep when he saw something he had never seen before: a bush that burned yet it was not consumed. He turned aside to take a look because while he had seen many things, he had never seen one of those before; a bush that was burning; yet it is not burned up? How interesting!

I did not see a burning bush. What I saw was a few stalks of corn sticking out of a field of soybeans. I turned aside to look at them and that is when I felt the Lord speak to me.

I want to speak to you today about “The Corn In The Midst Of The Beans.”

Sowing Deception, Getting Deceived

The Bible is filled with stories of people who planted actions into the soil of life and wind up reaping those same actions later.

Galatians 6:7 talks about reaping what you sow: whatever you plant in the ground will be what springs up later. What some people seem to forget is that principle of yield. That is, that what you sow gets multiplied.

You plant a few thousand seeds and you get hundreds or thousands of seeds in return. You plant a little soybean and you get a huge crop of soybeans; you plant a little corn and you get hundreds of bushels of corn.

You plant deceit; you wind up being the one deceived.

Take story of Jacob and Esau. Jacob and Esau were twins, but Esau was older than Jacob by a few minutes. That made him the first-born. As first-born he was

entitled to many things, not the least of which was a double portion of the inheritance when his father died. Esau's name meant "red" and "hairy."

Jacob, on the other hand, means "usurper" or "deceiver." The word comes from a Semitic word meaning "the backside of a horse" and denotes the connotation of someone who sneaks up on someone else from behind in order to steal something.

That is what we find him doing when he conspires with his mother to steal his brother's birthright.

Genesis 27:2: And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

Genesis 27:6: And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother...

So Jacob has the help of his mother to plot against his father. He knows that this is a deception, but he goes along with it anyway. He has sown the seeds of deception into his life with the help of his mother.

Genesis 27:9: Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

Genesis 27:14: And he went, and fetched, and brought [them] to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

Genesis 27:15: And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which [were] with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

Genesis 27:16: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

Pay attention to the tools that Jacob uses to deceive his father: he uses a goat and his brother's coat, two ordinary items around the house.

He uses the goat for two things:

- His mother uses the meat of the goat to make a meal like his father Isaac likes. The Bible doesn't provide us the recipe, but it does say that it is savory. The spices probably help hide the fact that goat meat doesn't taste like the venison that his father asked for.
- The second thing he does with the goat is to put its skin on his arms and his neck. Esau is hairy while Jacob is "smooth." He knows that if his father touches him he will be found out, so he takes the hairy skin from the goat and puts it on the back of his neck and on his arms.
- The third thing he does is he takes his brother's clothes. He does this because he wants to smell like his brother. Besides being the "ickiest" part of this story, it means that he works to ensure that his father is thoroughly and completely deceived.

He works to deceive all 5 of his father's senses: his father is almost blind, so he deceives his sight; he cooks a spicy meal to deceive his father's sense of taste; he wears his brother's clothes to deceive his father's sense of smell; he wears animal skins to deceive his sense of touch. The one sense he forgot about was his father's sense of hearing:

Genesis 27:22: And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice [is] Jacob's voice, but the hands [are] the hands of Esau.

But Isaac ignores his sense that something is wrong. Four of his five senses tell him that this is Esau, so he ignores the last sense. Jacob and his mother have successfully lived up to his name; they have made him a deceiver. They take the blessing of Isaac by using a goat and a cloak.

They plant a seed in Jacob's life consisting of a goat and a cloak. Because Jacob planted a seed of deceit, that seed continues to grow throughout the remainder of Jacob's life.

Jacob travels to the land of his Uncle Laban to find a wife. This same Laban had once convinced his own father to allow Isaac to marry Rebekah in the first place.

There was no deception or double-crossing when Laban brokered a deal to allow Rebekah to get married. But when his nephew Jacob (the deceiver) comes looking for a wife, now suddenly Laban starts dealing deceptively.

He promises Jacob his daughter Rachel in exchange for seven years of labor. But Jacob has planted the seeds of deception in his life. After seven years he gets to reap the harvest of that deception when Laban gives him Leah instead. His seven-year deal for Rachel turns into a 14-year deal.

Jacob responds by this harvest of deception that he has received and he (figuratively) replants the entire harvest. Jacob makes a deal with Laban that he will get the striped and weak members of the flock, while Laban will get the strong and perfect.

Genesis 30:32: I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and [of such] shall be my hire.

Then Jacob proceeds to manipulate the flock so that he gets the majority of them. He sows a harvest of deception against his father and receives a harvest of deception from his uncle.

So he takes that harvest of deception and sows it again and for the rest of his life Jacob is plagued by the cycle of sowing deception, reaping an even bigger deception, and then sowing the seeds that that deception again.

Once again the tool that he used in his initial deception of his father, blood of the goats, is part of his deception once again.

- Rachel and Leah have an ongoing feud about who can have more children. Neither one gets pregnant in order to bring a child into the world; they get pregnant to insult the other sister. Even the pregnancies are a deception. They even get their servant girls involved. Jacob never puts a stop to it. He winds up going along with the plans and even making the feud worse over time.
- Jacob leaves Laban by sneaking out when he knew his uncle was busy shearing sheep elsewhere on the farm. It is several days before Laban even knows that he has left.
- Rachel deceives her father by stealing his idols. She mostly does it as a part of the ongoing feud with her sister. (The idols represented a deed to her father's property.) Laban comes after them and she deceives her own father by sitting on the idols while he is searching for them. She hides the idols in the rugs she was using to sit on her camel. Remember the clothes that Jacob wore to deceive his father? They make a cameo appearance again as the "furniture" that Rachel uses to deceive her father.

He keeps reaping the harvest of his deception and instead of putting a stop to it; he re-plants the seeds of the deception again. Every time he does this, he gets a bigger harvest of deception. The deception and the lies get bigger and bigger.

The rivalry between Rachel and Leah turns into a rivalry between their children. The distrust and jealousy of Rachel and Leah turns into distrust and jealousy of Jacob's sons. His simple act of cooking a meal for his father has turned into a multi-generational feud that would shape the rest of the world.

The feud culminates with Jacob's sons selling their brother Joseph into Egyptian slavery, but the sale is not as simple as it first appears. Remember that Jacob planted the seed of deception by using two tools: the blood of a goat and a cloak.

After years and years of that deception escalating and escalating some more, it finally builds to a crescendo where the two tools of his original deception come together again:

Genesis 37:31: And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

Throughout his life Jacob has been involved in greater and greater deceptions. He started out deceiving his father with the blood of a goat and his brother's cloak. He planted the seed of that deception and it brought forth an even bigger deception.

He re-planted the seeds of that deception and got an even bigger deception. Again and again he kept reaping and sowing, reaping and sowing. Eventually his simple little seed has turned into an entire field of deception and lies.

Corn In The Beans

But just like the field of soybeans that I talked about at the beginning of my message, there is a stalk of corn growing in the middle of Jacob's field. In the

middle of the field of deception and lies, there is a relationship with God that was planted years before when he was running from his brother Esau. Before he met Rachel and Laban, Jacob met God.

Genesis 28:10: And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

Genesis 28:11: And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put [them for] his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

Genesis 28:12: And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Genesis 28:13: And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I [am] the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

Genesis 28:18: And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put [for] his pillows, and set it up [for] a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Genesis 28:19: And he called the name of that place Bethel:

Genesis 28:20: And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

Genesis 28:21: So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

Jacob planted a seed of a relationship with God. He never really cultivated that seed like he did the others, but it was always there. Like a stalk of corn sticking up in the middle of a soybean field, Jacob's vow to God remained.

As Jacob grew and cultivated a vast field of deception, there was a stalk of a relationship with God that remained untended and uncared for.

But God remembered Jacob. When Jacob returned from his journey abroad, God appeared to Jacob in the night.

Genesis 32:24: And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

Genesis 32:26: And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

Genesis 32:27: And he said unto him, What [is] thy name? And he said, Jacob.

Genesis 32:28: And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

"Israel" being a combination of the verb "serar – to struggle, rule, or reign," and the noun "ser – a prince." So "Israel" means, "God's prince" but also "one who struggles with God."

The word "ser" (prince) implies a struggle as well in the sense that he struggles against the chaos of the world. As God's prince, Israel is in charge of putting things right; of fighting against the chaos that makes up the world. Even today, the nation of Israel is "He who struggles on God's behalf."

Jacob's mission in life changes from the deceiver who creates chaos in the world to the orderly who puts things in order. This change occurs because Jacob struggles with God and will not let him leave until he is blessed.

In the midst of the field of deception that Jacob has cultivated his whole life stands one stalk of corn: the relationship with God.

It is only when he calls on God that he is heard and God is able to turn the situation to good. Jacob's sons are still jealous of Joseph, but God is able to turn that jealousy into something good.

Years later when Joseph is the vizier of Egypt; after he was sold into slavery by jealous brothers, after he was sent to prison even though he was innocent, even after he engages in a little deception of his own by putting his brother Simeon in prison, it is Joseph who is used by God to save his entire family from famine.

Genesis 45:4: And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I [am] Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

Genesis 45:5: Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

Jacob had appealed to God, and God responded by saving his entire family. He planted a seed of a relationship with God for himself and that seed eventually yielded a relationship with God for his sons, a nation, and eventually the entire world.

The angel would have passed by Jacob and left him when the sun rose, but Jacob wrestled with him and would not let him leave until he received a blessing.

All the deception he had created in his life was eventually un-done by calling out to God.

Don't Let Him Pass By

The disciples were once like Jacob, surrounded by trouble on all sides.

Mark 6:45: And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

Mark 6:46: And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Mark 6:47: And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

Mark 6:48: And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

Jesus even ignored the disciples as they struggled against the sea. He saw them toiling in their rowing, but He would have passed them by, but when they called out to Him, He joined them in the boat and the seas stopped raging.

Corn In Your Beans

You may be here today and feel like you have no right to call on the Lord. Perhaps you were like Jacob; you have spent your life sowing seeds of drug addiction, of promiscuity, of lies, of any number of sins.

Perhaps you feel that you were once like the field I mentioned before, that you once were full of corn: a relationship with God but now that crop is long gone and

now you have nothing but a field of sin. You feel like you have no right to approach God with such a life.

The truth is that God is walking by, hoping that you will call on Him. He has left a few remaining stalks of corn in your field of beans. He has hope that you will call on Him with what you have.

Take that small straggling remnant of your relationship with Him and use it as a seed. Offer it up to God. Call out to him and he will bless it. Bury your seed in the waters of Baptism and it will grow into a field full of relationship with Him.

Like a stalk of corn in a field full of beans, the Lord is offering you hope in the midst of your despair.

You only have to call out to Him.