

Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood." After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be." Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her." So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?" Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work." And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years. When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi. She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus, Can My Heartfelt Longing Still!

What does it mean to covet? That's a hard word to understand and to apply practically. It is especially hard to diagnose this sin in ourselves. The word means to desire or want something or someone. But is it wrong to want anything or anyone? If my car is ready to die, is it wrong to want a different car, or even a new car? Is it wrong for me to want a better job so that I can improve my life? Is it wrong for me to move out of my small home, which meets my needs, and move into larger home which gives my family more room? When does wanting become coveting?

To understand coveting, I think we have to go back to the first commandment. In both the 1st commandment and in the 9th and 10th Commandments, God is speaking to the human heart. In the 1st commandment, God doesn't say that we can't love anyone or anything else. He is saying that he doesn't want us to love anyone or anything else more than him. There is a spot in our heart that

belongs only to God and to no one else. There is a longing inside of us, a yearning to be at peace with God and in fellowship with him. Nothing else in the world can fill that void, that spot in our heart created only for God. Nothing should make us more excited, more fulfilled, than our connection to God does. When we try to fill that spot with anything or anyone else, we will always be disappointed. *Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus, can my heartfelt longing still!*

Coveting is when we take an ordinary want or desire and try to make it something bigger than it is. It's like taking a small balloon and trying to blow it up into a hot-air balloon that will lift us up to the skies. It just doesn't work. And when we try to do that, we usually end up doing bad things or making bad decisions to fulfill that desire. How many people have committed adultery because they loved a person so much they were willing to do anything for that love? How many people have cheated or stolen because they wanted to have something they couldn't afford? How many people live with plenty and should be thankful, but instead complain in their hearts because they can't have what they want? That's coveting. The story of Jacob and Rachel and Leah teach us something about those kinds of wants and desires that approach god-like proportions in our lives.

I. Jacob

Why would Jacob love Rachel so much that he would do anything and everything to have her as his wife? Remember how Jacob got here. He was the younger twin of his brother, Esau. Normally the oldest got the birthright, which basically means everything that his father owned, and the younger worked for the older. But Jacob was the tricky one. In fact, that's what the meaning of his name implies. At his mother's urging, he tricked his blind father into giving him the blessing by pretending to be Esau. As a result, Esau was so angry that Jacob had to get out of Dodge with only his staff in his hand. He ran north to find his uncle and stay with him.

Perhaps there were tensions in Jacob's family. What family doesn't live with those? But it was still a family, and now he had none. He was all alone. Well, not quite all alone. God promised to be with him. On the way he lay down and saw a vision of a stairway to heaven on which God's angels were descending and ascending. This was God's way of confirming that he was not alone. Practically, he was an orphan, but he was not alone.

When he got the general area where Laban lived, he found some shepherds and asked about his uncle. And it just so happened that Laban's daughter, Rachel, was coming to the well with a flock of sheep. When you read these stories, aren't you amazed how things like this worked out for God's people? Is there a message for us there? And the Bible says that Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep out loud. Do you see the emotional state that Jacob was in? He is still grieving over being separated from his family, and here comes Rachel. What a perfect time to fall in love!

And oh, did he fall in love. Our story says that Rachel was "lovely in form and beautiful." Do I have to paint a picture here? She was gorgeous in every way. And by the way, she didn't mind tending her father's sheep as well. Laban came to Jacob after a month and offered to pay him a salary. It didn't take long for Laban to recognize a good worker in Jacob, and he wanted to keep him around. When he asked Jacob how much he wanted for his work, Jacob made him an offer he could refuse. He would work for seven years if he could marry his daughter, Rachel.

Seven years. Men, I'm sure you would work seven years for your wife, wouldn't you? Of course you would! Ladies, please don't ask him that question at home. But that's not the point here. The custom was to compensate a father for the loss of his daughter in those days. But what Jacob offered Laban was way over the top. He wanted Rachel so much that he would do anything, absolutely anything, to have her as his wife. He was so much in love that he couldn't imagine being happy without Rachel.

Have you ever had a desire like that? Did you ever want something so much that it clouded your judgment? Sometimes it can be the love for a man or a woman. Sometimes it can be a driving ambition to be the best football player on the team, or the smartest kid in the class. Sometimes it can be getting that job that will make you feel successful, that will blow up the balloon of your pride until it is ready to burst. You know that it has become a covetous desire because not having what you want makes you unhappy. It becomes ... like a god in your heart.

So what happened to Jacob? The deceiver who deceived his father and his brother in turn became the one who was deceived. Laban saw his love for Rachel was so deep that he took advantage of Jacob. On his wedding night, he replaced Rachel with Leah. Can you imagine what must have gone through Jacob's mind when he went to bed with what he thought was beautiful Rachel and woke up with not so pretty Leah? That's the way it is with all of the ungodly desires we carry in our heart. We think that job will make us happy, but in the morning, we wake up with Leah. We think that being the best football player on the team will make us happy, and then you blow out your knee on the third game of the season. Do you see how the devil wants to trick us and deceive us with our desires and ambitions?

So what did Jacob do? He agreed to work another seven years for Rachel as well. Two wives. How does that work? Well, if you read the rest of the story in Genesis, you will see that it doesn't work very well. Did Jacob think this was o.k. with God? He didn't learn it from his parents. But when you love someone so much, you will do anything to be with that person. That's the danger of letting anyone or anything grab that place in your heart that belongs to God alone. And what about Leah?

II. *Leah*

I really feel for Leah, but she really made the same mistake that Jacob made. Our text compares her to beautiful Rachel and says that Leah had weak eyes. What does that mean? We can't say for sure, but perhaps it was something like being cross-eyed. She was the girl that none of the boys looked at twice. She was the girl that probably figured she would never get married and have children and be happy. She was the oldest daughter, the first in line to get married, but who would marry her? She saw Jacob and Rachel together and she wished that it could be her getting married to this wonderful man. So when her father came and told her his plan, she went along with it. Why else would she sacrifice her honor? I'm guessing that Laban didn't tell her about the second part of the deal – offering Rachel to Jacob as well.

So she married her dream guy, and what happened? Our text says that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. Every day Leah lived with that comparison. Every day she saw Jacob gaze lovingly into Rachel's eyes and avoid looking at her. Every day she was what she had always been – the girl that everyone looked at and then looked away.

But when God saw that Leah was not loved, he gave her something that Rachel did not have for a long time. He gave her children. And the names she gives to her children are significant. She calls the first child Reuben, which means to be seen. She says that it's because the Lord has seen her misery. "My husband doesn't see me ... but the Lord does." She named the second son, Simeon, which means to be heard, "because God heard that I am not loved." My husband doesn't listen to me, but God does! She calls the name of the third son Levi, which means loved or attached. "Maybe now my husband will love me," she says. Do you see how she aches to be loved by her husband?

I feel for Leah, I really do. But she's making the same mistake that Jacob made. She has allowed this desire to be seen, to be heard, to be loved by her husband to take the place in her heart that belongs to God alone. And when you do that, you will always be disappointed. You will go to bed with Rachel but wake up with Leah. There is not a person in the world that can fulfill all your hopes and dreams. If you think you will find that joy in your spouse, you will be disappointed. No one can live up to that expectation. Besides, someday you will stand by their grave and be alone. Then who or what will give you joy? If you put all your hopes and dreams in your children, you will be disappointed. Someday they will leave your house, and maybe they will remember to call you on your birthday. Maybe. If you think that you can find joy and satisfaction in your work, I hope you never get fired, because you will fall apart. There is a place in our heart that only God can fill, and no one else.

Leah finally learned that. She had a fourth child, and called him Judah. "This time, this time" she says, "I will praise the Lord." She says that not because she had a fourth child, but because she knew that her Savior God in heaven loved her still. She was seen by God. She was heard by God. She was loved by God. God was her Savior still. Her husband was not. Her children were not. God alone could be her Savior God.

Do you know who Judah was? Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Judah was the most important because he was the ancestor of Jesus. David came from the tribe of Judah. Jesus was the Son of David, and from the tribe of Judah. I don't know if she knew this at the moment or not, but in the end of Genesis, Jacob identifies Judah as the one from whom the Savior would come.

Imagine. From ugly Leah our beautiful Savior was born. But was Jesus really beautiful? Isaiah says that Jesus had no beauty or majesty that we should be attracted to him. He was just like Leah. He was rejected by men and despised by the people. They didn't see him. He was one "from whom men hide their faces." They didn't see that he was the holy Son of God. They didn't listen to him. They heard his voice and rejected him. Sure he preached to 5000 on the mountain top, but then they rejected him because he didn't want to become their bread king. They didn't attach themselves to him. In the end, even his close disciples ran away from him so that when he died, he died alone.

Do you see what a wonderful Savior you have? Jesus came into this world experience your loneliness, your rejection, your sorrows, your disappointments. He did this for you so that by his death and by his righteousness he could make you beautiful to your heavenly Father. You have been washed in the cleansing fountain of his blood. You have been baptized into his name and wear the robes of his righteousness. Do you feel invisible? Jesus sees you. Do you feel as if no one is listening to you? Jesus is listening. Do you feel that no one loves you? Jesus loves you and always will.

Can you keep this faith in Jesus at the center of your heart? Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus, can your heartfelt longing still! When you are grounded in your faith, when you are centered in Christ, when your life revolves around him and not around whatever wants to become your obsession in life, then

you will live with a joy and contentment that no one can ever take away from you. You will never wake up with Leah! Amen.