

Introduction

When I was at TCU, I attended all of the home football games. We weren't very good; in fact we only won five games in my four years, and two of those years were perfect seasons, 0-11. But, over the years I have become a bigger fan of college football. I love the excitement and enthusiasm in college games.

There are some big rivalries in college football. The rivalry between Auburn and Alabama is well known. The Oklahoma and Texas rivalry is pretty big. The Army and Navy rivalry is well known. The biggest rivalry in college football is Ohio State and Michigan. I am not interested in either team. I just pull for TCU.

A couple of weeks ago one of the college games got voted as the 2018 game of the year by Bleacher Report. It was between Texas A&M and LSU. Both were top 25 teams in the country. The two teams went back and forth the whole game. "It was a contest that featured two teams that refused to give up no matter what the odds even in regulation." At the end of the fourth quarter, both teams were tied at 31. They had seven overtimes. Texas A&M went for a two point conversion and made it in the seventh overtime to win 74-72.

This week, instead of seven overtimes, there were seven years. There was a fierce rivalry going on and both parties refused to give up no matter what the odds were. This rivalry was not about college football; it was about a rivalry between two sisters. In Leviticus 18:18, God said, "*You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.*" The word for rival that is used is *tsarar*, which means , to make a rival. (Strong's H6887d). The root word is *tsarah*, which means one who vexes or shows hostility (Strong's H6869b). When two sisters marry the same man, a fierce rivalry takes place. That is why God gave the law that a man was not to marry a woman and her sister. But, our account today takes place over four hundred years before the law was given. There was no law at the time.

There was another rival in the Scriptures. It took place in 1 Samuel 1:4-6. Elkanah had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. He would give portions to Peninnah, but he would give a double portion to Hannah, for he loved Hannah. Her rival, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her because God had closed her womb. Their rivalry involved bearing children also. We have no evidence to show that these were two sisters. The fact is that when you have two women married to the same man, there is going to be a rivalry, and they are going to fight over the husband's love. Elkanah loved Hannah more and it created a fierce and bitter rivalry. God set up marriage between a man and a woman, and the two shall become one. It was never that the three or the four shall become one flesh. It was a man and a woman, and the two shall become one flesh.

(1 Sam 1:4-6) "When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; {5} but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. {6} Her rival, (*tsarah*, Strong's H6869b, one who vexes, to show hostility) however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb."

In Ecclesiastes 4, Solomon wrote that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. In our text today, every child that was born was the result of rivalry, not between a man and his neighbor, but between a woman and her sister.

(Eccl 4:4) “I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry (qinah, Strong's H7068, jealousy, zeal) between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Jacob fell in love with Rachel from the moment he met her. He made an agreement with Laban to serve for seven years for Rachel, the younger sister. However, on their wedding night, Laban gave him Leah, and he did not realize it until the next morning. There was a lot of partying going on at the bachelor's party, feast, or celebration (mishteh) that Laban put on. Jacob confronted

Laban about deceiving him, and they agreed that at the end of the first week, Laban would give him Rachel also, and he would serve another seven years for her. So, our text ended last week by saying, “So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.” (Gen 29:30). The stage was set. The rivalry had begun. Jacob had two wives, and not just two wives, two sisters, and both were fighting for his love.

In our text today, eleven of Jacob's twelve children are born. We will go through the various verses where the children are given, and the significance of each child. All eleven children are born in a space of seven years or time periods. We will look at all the scoring plays.

1. Leah's First Scoring Drives (Gen 29:31-35)

(Gen 29:31-35) “Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. {32} Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." {33} Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon. {34} She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. {35} And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.”

The Lord saw that Leah was unloved. The King James says, “when the Lord saw that Leah was hated,” which is more correct. The Hebrew word is sane (Strong's H813, which means to hate or be an enemy. When the Lord saw that Leah was hated or not loved, He opened her womb. The Hebrew word for saw is raah and she named her son Reuben which is a compound word of raah and ben. Leah acknowledged that God had seen her affliction and given her a son.

After giving birth to Reuben, Leah conceived again. Notice what she said, “because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.” The Hebrew word for heard is shama, which means to hear intelligently. So she named this son, Simeon, which is a derivation of shama.

There are two basic needs that we have in our life that are addressed here. First, we have a need to be loved. Notice Leah's desire; she wanted her husband to love her. We all have a need to be loved. Second, we want to know that God sees and hears us, and is watching over us. That is comforting, particularly when we are going through a tough time. She did not feel loved, but she knew that God was watching over her and listening to her when she poured her heart out to Him. It is very comforting and encouraging to know that God hears us and responds to us.

When Daniel was fasting and praying, the Lord sent Gabriel to him. Notice what he told Daniel. “For from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.” Daniel had to be encouraged that God was listening to his prayers and had sent Gabriel in response.

(Dan 10:12) “Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.”

In December 1992 I was in Houston, Texas for the finals of the PGA Tour Qualifier. I was first off that morning and it was 30 degrees and the winds were blowing about 30 miles per hour. I was all bundled up and yet I was still so cold my hands were numb. I shot four over par on the front nine. I knew that it would take about ten under par for the six-round tournament, so I was in real trouble. I had a conversation with the Lord going from the ninth green to the tenth tee. I reminded the Lord of the prophetic word he gave me in church that summer. The Holy Spirit came upon me during the service. We were sitting in the balcony of the church we were attending, and I quickly wrote down what the Spirit was saying to me. One of the things that He said was, “I will put you back on the PGA Tour.” I didn't use a caddy that week. The caddies told me that I needed them in order to get my card. So, I reminded the Lord of what He had spoken to me. I also reminded Him of 2 Chronicles 16:9, which says, “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth to strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” I told the Lord that my heart was completely His, and I needed His strong support. I shot three under par on the back nine and went on to tie for 13th that week, and God did put me back on the PGA Tour. His eyes move to and fro to strongly support those whose heart is completely His. It is very comforting and encouraging to know that the Lord is watching over us.

Notice what John wrote about God hearing our prayers. We gain confidence by knowing that God hears us when we ask anything according to His will, and we will have the requests that we have asked for. God's will was for people to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God's will was to make Abraham's descendants as the dust of the earth. God's will is for a husband to love their wife. Leah's prayers were according to God's general and specific will, and He saw and heard her prayers, and opened up her womb.

(1 John 5:14-15) “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. {15} And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

After giving birth to Reuben and Simeon, Leah conceived again. She said that this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons. The Hebrew word for attached is lavah, and so she named her son Levi, which comes from lavah. The names of all the children have significance. The names that we give our children should have significance and meaning. We see another need that all of us have; we have a need to belong. We were never created to live alone. God said it was not good for Adam to be alone, so He created Eve for him. We have a need to belong to a family. We have a need to be attached to a church family.

The caution that we have is where we get our sense of belonging. The gang populations have exploded across the world. They are taking a God-given need in our lives and taking advantage of it. They give young men a sense of belonging, but abuse that to get them involved in doing wrong things. We need to meet the need of belonging in people. We need to affirm them. We

need to include them. But, we need to give them that sense of belonging with pure motives. We need to give people a sense of purpose. People want to belong to something that is doing significant things. They don't want their lives to be lived in vain. That is the main message in the book of Ecclesiastes. Life under the sun, or life without God is vanity. People want their lives to count. Jesus worked for eternal things. God has given the church a mandate to preach the gospel, which has eternal rewards. Our work is not in vain in the Lord. (John 6:40, 1 Cor 15:58, Eccl 2:11, 2:17)

Paul understood this need to be attached to a body. After being saved on the road to Damascus, he began to preach Jesus. His life was threatened so he went to Jerusalem. When he arrived, he was trying to associate with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple. We cannot blame them; Paul had imprisoned and had many of them killed before he was saved. Now, he was trying to associate with them. The Greek word is kollao (Strong's G2853), which means to glue. He tried to glue himself or be connected to the church.

(Acts 9:26) "When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple."

I believe the believers in America need to hear that message. We have lots of people who occasionally attend a church, but they are not attached or connected. People have a need to be connected and they need to get connected. We are the Connection Church, helping people connect with God and with one another.

After giving birth to Levi, she conceived again, and said, "this time I will praise the Lord, and she named her son, Judah. One of the Hebrew words for praise is yadah, and Judah is a derivative of yadah.

We find a fourth need revealed in us. We have a need to praise the Lord. We were created to worship God. We are commanded to worship the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We could easily spend a few months on this verse, because there is so much Scripture about worship. Lots of things happen when we worship God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:18 that when we worship God with our thanksgivings, praises, and songs, that He fills us with His Holy Spirit. We get filled with God when we worship. That is why a day in His courts is better than a thousand outside; we get filled with God.

(Eph 5:18-20) "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, {19} speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; {20} always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;"

After having Judah, she stopped bearing for a brief time period. She would bear more, but not immediately. Now, we get to look at Rachel's first scoring drive.

2. Rachel's First Scoring Drives (Gen 30:1-8)

(Gen 30:1-8) "Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." {2} Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" {3} She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear

on my knees, that through her I too may have children." {4} So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. {5} Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. {6} Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. {7} Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. {8} So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali."

When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister. She made a demand of Jacob that he give her children or else she would die. Her desire for children was born out of jealousy. Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" Jacob recognized that it is God that opens and closes wombs, and he was not God.

I want to talk about motives and children. Leah wanted Jacob to love her because of the children. Rachel wanted children because she was jealous of her sister, who had children. People asked Karen and I why we had so many children. They wanted to know if we were Catholic or Mormon. I had lots of opportunities to talk about the value of children.

Psalms 127 tells us that children are a gift from the Lord. Furthermore, it says the fruit of the womb is a reward. Third, it says that the man whose quiver is full of them is blessed. The attitude of the world is that children are an accident and are not wanted. That is why there are so many millions of babies each year being aborted. They were an accident and not wanted. The world thinks that children are a lot of trouble. In the eyes of the world, there is no reason any person in their right mind would want children, especially a full quiver of children. Our attitude was that we wanted any and all gifts that God wanted to give us. The Scriptures say that He gives good gifts to His children. Who were we to tell God what gifts we would allow Him to give us. We saw a lot of children as a blessing. We were not going to tell God how we would let Him bless us. We never wanted to refuse a blessing from God, either children or other. Our motive was to live lives that honored and revered God. Children were just one way that God may reward a man or woman who fears God. (Ps 128:1-4)

(Ps 127:3-5) "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. {4} Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. {5} How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate."

James talked about motives. He said that we ask and we do not receive because we ask with wrong motives. I believe it is important to ask with right motives. Rachel has a right prayer, but she has wrong motives. It was motivated out of jealousy.

(James 4:3) "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Paul talked about motives in his first letter to Timothy. He told Timothy to silence men who were teaching wrong things. He said the goal of their instruction was love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. (1 Tim 1:5) Their motive was love. There were some that did not have pure motives.

Paul talked about motives in his letter to the Philippians. He said that some were preaching Christ from envy and strife, had selfish ambition, and did not have pure motives. In this case Paul rejoiced, not that their motives were wrong, but that the gospel was being preached. Rachel had wrong motives, but the will of God was being sought, and God was going to be honored.

(Phil 1:15-18) “Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; {16} the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; {17} the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. {18} What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.”

Rachel's next move was to send in a substitute. She was not getting the job done, so she called in a substitute. She said, “Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children.” Any children that were born to a slave belonged to the owner of the slave. Bilhah belonged to Rachel, so any children that she had would become her children. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

Then, Rachel said, “God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan.” The Hebrew word for vindicated is *din* (Strong's H1777), which means judged or vindicated. She named her son, Dan, which is a derivative of *din*. She felt that God had judged her and found her innocent. Her ability to have children was not a judgment against her, which was proven by God giving her a son.

Bilhah conceived again and bore Naphtali. Rachel said, with mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and I have indeed prevailed. The Hebrew word for wrestlings is *naphtulim* (Strong's H5319), and Naphtali is a derivative of it. Rachel is competing and wrestling with her sister. Both want to win. Leah wants Jacob to be the prize. Rachel wants to prevail against her sister; she wants to win.

I want to talk about two things, the timeline and the significance. First, let's look at the timeline. In our text today, Jacob has eleven sons and one daughter children. Six sons are born by Leah, two by Leah's handmaid, two by Rachel's handmaid, and one by Rachel. All of this is within a seven year period. After Joseph is born, Jacob tells Laban that his time commitment is up, and to give him his wives and children. He had served seven years for Rachel, but got Leah. After the deception, he and Laban agreed to another seven years for Rachel. So, all twelve children are born in that second seven years that he served Laban.

Leah began having children immediately. I believe that she had children four years in a row without a break. After she began having children, Rachel noticed that she was not having any children and became jealous. She gave Bilhah to Jacob and Dan was born. Dan had to have been born sometime after the first year, but we don't know exactly when. When Naphtali was born, she said that she had prevailed against her sister. I believe that he was born between Leah's second and third child. The use of the word prevail seems to indicate that when Leah had scored, she had countered and scored points, even if it was with a substitute player.

When Leah stopped bearing, it was ever so briefly, and she gave her maid, Zilpah to Jacob and she gave birth to Gad. Then, she gave Zilpah to Jacob again, and she had Asher. From a time perspective, while Zilpah was pregnant with Gad, she must have become pregnant with Issachar.

In the sixth year, both Asher and Zebulun were born. Then, in year seven, Leah has her seventh child, a little girl named Dinah; and Rachel has her first child, Joseph. That was a very busy household, or two busy households. We don't know the living arrangements and accommodations. We only know that they had twelve children under the age of seven, and it was a busy household.

Timeline of Jacob's Children		
Year	Leah	Rachel
1	Reuben	Dan (Bilhah) Naphtali (Bilhah)
2	Simeon	
3	Levi	
4	Judah	
5	Gad (Zilpah), Issachar (Leah)	
6	Asher (Zilpah), Zebulun (Leah)	
7	Dinah	Joseph
14+		Benjamin

The second thing has to do with the significance of this. We saw that we have a need to be seen and heard by God. We saw that we have a need to belong and be connected to God and to others. We saw that we have a need to worship God. Here, we see two other needs. We have a need to live righteously. We have a need to be vindicated by God for our actions. We also have a need to prevail and to overcome. I call this being successful. Nobody likes to fail in their endeavors; we like to be successful. God wants us to be successful. He tells us to meditate day and night on His word so that we can have success. In our families, we need to help our children learn to be successful. In our businesses, we need to help our employees learn to overcome and be successful. In our churches, we need to equip people for the work of the ministry, and to help them be successful. That is something that God desires, and it is something we need in our lives.

Conclusion and Applications

This morning we have looked at the first two scoring drives. We have seen that the names of these children had significance to the mother, and also to people in general. We all have a need to be heard and seen. I was reminded of this during the week. One morning at breakfast I heard, "Grandma, watch this!" One of the grandchildren was jumping on the trampoline and he did not want Grandma to miss what he was doing. He had a need to be noticed. This encouragement this morning to you is that God sees and hears the cry of your heart. He saw and heard Leah. He heard Daniel. He sees and hears us. Be encouraged this morning that the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth to strongly support those whose heart is completely His. (2 Chron 16:9) No matter what you are going through, God sees and hears you. Keep pouring your heart out to Him, and be patient.

This morning, perhaps you are struggling in an area. God wants you to prevail and overcome. I want you to know this morning that there is no temptation that has overtaken you that you cannot handle. God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to handle; He will show you a way of escape. God has given you everything that you need pertaining to life and Godliness. (1 Cor 10:13, 2 Peter 1:3)

Perhaps you have been feeling condemned about something. God wants to vindicate you. He tells us that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” God wants to vindicate you this morning. He wants to set you free from any guilt or condemnation. He did that for Rachel, and He will do that for you. (Rom 8:31)

We saw that we have a need to be attached or connected. Leah had a need for her husband to be attached to her. Paul had a need to be joined or connected to the church in Jerusalem. If you are not connected to a local body, I encourage you to pray about connecting with us. You simply need to let me know that you want to be a member of this body and to make this your church home.

Perhaps this morning, you have never connected with the Lord. He desires to fellowship with us. He desires to be your Zebulun this morning, to come and make His dwelling place with you. He has a desire to be with you. He desires you to worship Him with all your heart. It begins by receiving Him as Your Lord this morning. If you believe that Jesus is Lord, that He came in the flesh, died on the cross for our sins, and was raised from the dead, then you just need to confess Him as Lord. It could be as simple as saying to Him, “Lord, I do believe, and I ask You to come into my life and to be my Lord. Forgive me of my sins and fill me with Your Holy Spirit.” If you pray this, He will do that. He will come into your life and your life will be forever changed. (Rom 10:9-10)

Let's pray.

Introduction (Lev 18:18, 1 Sam 1:4-6, Eccl 4:4)

1. **Leah's First Scoring Drives** (Gen 29:31-35, Dan 10:12, 1 John 5:14-15, John 6:40, 1 Cor 15:58, Eccl 2:11, 2:17, Acts 9:26, Eph 5:18-20)
 - Reuben:
 - Simeon:
 - Levi:
 - Judah:
2. **Rachel's First Scoring Drives** (Gen 30:1-8, Ps 128:1-4, Ps 127:3-5, James 4:3, 1 Tim 1:5, Phil 1:15-18)
 - Dan:
 - Naphtali:
3. **Leah's Second Scoring Drives**
4. **Rachel's Second Scoring Drive**

Conclusion and Applications (2 Chron 16:9, 1 Cor 10:13, 2 Peter 1:3, Rom 8:31, 10:9-10)