

Day 10: Feb. 12 (by Teresa Anderson)

Over the course of my career, I have met with hundreds of families who have been presented with some difficult and unsettling news: a dementia diagnosis for their loved one. I have the privilege of helping them start to work through that information and to make plans for their loved one's care. The spouse of the one who is newly diagnosed and their children lovingly consider what the patient's needs and preferences are and how they can best meet those, while making their own sacrifices to make this happen. Right? Wrong. It almost never happens this way. There is usually some jockeying for positions of power (e.g., who gets control of the money), sibling accusations of malicious intent, and a fair bit of denial by the patient and/or the most emotionally distant member of the family. I've heard stories of kids stealing and selling the prescription drugs of their parent, brothers suing each other to become mom's guardian, and grandchildren stealing grandpa's identity to qualify for loans on which they later default. In general, families are messy and complicated and often dysfunctional, and they do not look like the Cosby family did on TV.

When I read about Jacob and his relationships, it reminds me of those my patients have had. Jacob is undoubtedly a scoundrel. He is liar and a cheat, and he comes from a family of folks who had serious character flaws, as well. And yet, YET, God loves him. God blesses him. God promises him wealth and descendants. God does not chastise him when he promises to be faithful to God only if God gives him protection, food, clothing and a safe return to his home. He is God's chosen person for this part of the story He is telling, as the story winds its way to Jesus and then eventually to us.

The fact that God's book is absolutely loaded with these hot mess characters who cannot get their act together for a day, not to mention for a season, gives me great hope. If God can fulfill his plan with such people, he surely can use us to accomplish the good he has in mind for today and for tomorrow and for all of eternity. Praise God for his acceptance of us as we are and for his invitation to join him in the work he is doing, despite (and maybe even because of) our character flaws!