

## SERMON FOR JULY 16, 2017

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable unto thee, Oh Lord, Our Rock and Our Redeemer.” Amen.

I am fascinated with twins. I am also fascinated with the powerful nature of our hands, and the infinite outstretched arms and hands of God. Jacob and Esau were the twins born to Rebekah and Isaac in the Old Testament lesson today. I also have a set of twins in my family—my sister has twins, Jacob and Carlyn, a boy and a girl twin. I’m sure many of you know a twin, some of you might be twins, or you might have twins in your family as well. I believe that we can learn a lot about our Christian faith through looking at twins, and how twins behave.

As we learn from the Genesis reading, Jacob and Esau were as different as night and day, as twins, and siblings in general, can be—Esau became a skilled hunter and a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. And from Rebekah’s womb, Esau was born first, then Jacob a close second. The powerful image that stands out to me is how Jacob was born with his hand gripping Esau’s heel.

One commentary that I consulted said that Jacob gripping Esau’s heel could have been because he so desperately wanted to be the first born, and was trying to get past Esau in the delivery. He was already fighting with his brother!

Just as Jacob may have wanted to be the first born of the twins, we often (in our human nature) want to be first at something, and we sometimes are so competitive about it that we might forget to pray, and we might forget that God is “Number One”. He is first. We are not. I have found that it really doesn’t work to take on the attitude that I must be first, or “win” on an issue,

because in those cases, the best lesson I have learned to remember that God is in charge and He knows what's best for us. Events happen in God's time, not our own.

Another possible explanation of why Jacob was holding Esau's heel on his way out of Rebekah's womb is simply that Jacob was just wanting to make sure that he got out of the womb too.

Even though Jacob and Esau became men who were very different, and one sold his birthright to the other, the image of one baby holding the other's heel is a powerful testimony to something perhaps even more to a twin's relationship with each other.

I am fascinated with twins, and the fact that my sister has a twin boy and girl adds to my fascination. For instance, along with the story of Jacob grabbing Esau's heel, I am reminded of a time when my sister's twins were babies, not more than a month old. I had the pleasure of visiting my sister and her family and met my twin niece and nephew for the first time. While there, I watched my sister feeding the twins both at the same time, which was not an easy task! But the most precious moment happened while my sister was nursing—these two little ones were holding hands. It was one of the most beautiful sights I think I've ever seen, and it is a sight I will never forget, and it happened almost 18 years ago. It was very powerful and heartwarming.

So, what can we learn from twins about our Christian faith? I see three areas I'd like to explore with you, and I invite you to consider.

First, we are, in a sense, like twins with God. As we grow closer to God, closer to Jesus in our faith walks, and our faith continues to mature, it is as if we are figuratively holding hands with God. Since before we were born, God created us, and has been holding us in His Almighty hands, guarding us, guiding us, protecting us, and keeping us safe, and always loving us. We are

His sons and daughters. In that hand-holding with God, He grips us with His love, His grace, His peace, and His presence. God is a lifeline when we are in crisis—He holds us in the palm of His hands.

Yet, it can very definitely be a mutual hand-holding, because when we choose to dedicate our lives to Him, we form a relationship (both personal and corporate) with God’s Son, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, not only does God hold us in His hands, but we reach our hands out to Him as persons in Christ. It is a beautiful image of the hands of God touching us, but we also touching, or at least reaching, for His.

At some point, I encourage you to take a moment to ask yourself: How does my hand touch God’s? In what ways do I mutually hold His hand?

Second, we have our own prayer language with God, just as twins can have their own language with each other. What has been another interesting thing to watch about the twins in my family is that when Jacob and Carlyn were toddlers, and both were speaking English at early ages, I remember hearing them speak to each other in what I believe was their own language—they were conversing, and reacting non-verbally to each other’s statements. The words were unintelligible to me, and to my family, but they were communicating with one another in Twin speak. You’ve probably heard this term, and there are even websites describing the concept! Basically, twin speak is a word used to describe the “secret language” that occasionally exists between biological twins.

The story continues with my sister's twins. Just a few years ago, I was sitting in the living room at my sister's house, and Jacob and Carlyn started to speak in their own language, as though to make sure that I couldn't hear what they were saying to each other. Again, they were speaking Twin speak. And once again, it was a beautiful thing. Twin speak is something that only twins share. Further, what we can learn about our Christian faith through twins is that we each have our own prayer language with God our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our individual prayer times are unique and very special. No one else prays exactly like me. No one else prays exactly as each of you. It is our own unique language with God. Just as twins have their own unique language with each other.

This reminds me of the Book of Acts, chapter 2, when the day of Pentecost came and all the people were gathered in one place, and in Acts 2:14, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."

Just as each person, filled with the Holy Spirit, was given a language, so too are we blessed with a unique prayer language.

At some point, I encourage you to take a moment and ask yourself: What is my personal prayer language with God? How do I express my prayers to Him? When do I pray deepest when it feels like God and I are really connecting?

The third way we can learn about our Christian faith through twins is by considering the idea that twins are bound together in a way like no other. Sometimes we hear about twins having a "6<sup>th</sup> sense" about each other, for example, even though one twin may live on the East Coast, and one twin on the West coast, they know each other so well, that one or the other might call,

thinking something was wrong with the other before anyone else knows. Another example is with my own twin niece and nephew. They love each other and protect each other as young adults, now getting ready to enter college this fall. It will be interesting to see if they have that “6<sup>th</sup> sense” , if you will, about each other.

Jacob and Carlyn are so connected in a way that goes above and beyond the average sibling-to-sibling relationship without a doubt. I am convinced that if one of them were in a crisis situation, the other would know and be there before the rest of us.

With God, He knows when we are in crisis before we do. He knows what we are thinking and feeling before we do. He planned for us even before our mothers and fathers did. God is the Creator, the Master Planner, the Master Healer, and Lord and Master of us all.

Again, we are like twins with God. As Christians, we are so connected with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in amazing and meaningful ways. If we extend the beautiful image of God’s hands reaching infinitely around us to touch us and hold us, it can be a representation of our human connectivity with each other as well. We have special bonds with people who are special to us. As believers, we have a very special connectivity with God.

At some point, I encourage you to take a moment to ask yourself: How am I so connected to God that my relationship with Him goes beyond any other relationship in my life?

My brothers and sisters in Christ, in addition to Loving God with all our hearts, and Loving our neighbors as ourselves, all we really need to know and do as persons of faith is to hold hands with God (and HOLD ON TIGHT!), speak with God in prayer, and know that God is there for us, answering prayer, comforting us, holding us in His Almighty hands. All we need to

strive to be is a servant of God, serving Him with gladness, and connecting with Him so richly and so deeply that through our faith journeys, we will see God's Grace in our lives from the ordinary moments to the extraordinary moments.

For Jacob and Esau, there were difficult times in their lives. For my sister's twins, Jacob and Carlyn, there have been, and will still be, difficult times in their lives. Being twins certainly doesn't exempt one from the challenges and ups and downs in life. However, my prayer is that we can all be more like twins with God, holding God's hands, praying in our own prayer languages with God, and connecting with God at an even deeper level of faith.

I am fascinated with twins and fascinated with God's hands and how they touch us, even when we, as humans, don't realize it. The prophet Isaiah in chapter 41, verse 10, says: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

May we each feel the Hands of God touching us. And may we each touch back.

AMEN.