

We Don't Always 'Get It,' but Sometimes We Do

Genesis 25:19-34; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Psalm 119:105-112 7-13-08

Some of us miss the point about what the most valuable things in life are. We can try to blame this on the somewhat skewed view of life our culture provides for us. This would be a very acceptable explanation if it were not for people who live beside us, under the same societal pressure we do, who seem to lead lives that are focused on what is good and true while avoiding buying into all the frills some think we need to have. For parents raising children this is an especially difficult task—to get their kids to understand that the true value in life lays in things other than a Nintendo Wii or an expensive cellular phone that is not necessary for successful daily life.

Of course, as I pondered this, I thought of an old song about the quest for the meaning in life. Remember this?.

*What's it all about, Alfie?
Is it just for the moment we live?
What's it all about when you sort it out, Alfie?
Are we meant to take more than we give
Or are we meant to be kind?
And if only fools are kind, Alfie,
Then I guess it's wise to be cruel.
And if life belongs only to the strong, Alfie,
What will you bend on an old golden rule?
As sure as I believe there's a heaven above, Alfie,
I know there's something much more,
Something even non-believers can believe in.
I believe in love, Alfie.
Without true love we just exist, Alfie.
Until you find the love you've missed you're nothing, Alfie.
When you walk let your heart lead the way
And you'll find love any day, Alfie.*

We certainly are not the first generation to struggle with this problem. This lack of understanding what is really important in life has been around, most likely, since humans began to stroll the earth. From our scripture readings we can easily see that “we don't always ‘get it’ but sometimes we do.”

Take poor, hapless Esau, for example. Of course, he is painted as a bit slower than his crafty brother Jacob. Even from their days in the womb Jacob was always determined to come out on top and used any means at his disposal to get the best of his brother. He is often referred to as “the Trickster.” In our reading for this morning, Esau's stomach got the better of his brain and he sold his birthright, his blessing as older son, to his brother.

This might not seem like much to us but, in the culture of the times, the eldest son got almost everything when his father died and the younger siblings were left to shift on their own. Esau was taken in by Jacob and not for the first or last time. To lose out on the blessing of his father would affect Esau for life. He didn't quite understand what it was he was giving up when he so easily parted company with his blessing. A bowl of stew