



The Eyes of Leah
Genesis 29:15-20
March 8, 2015

Alec is in love. He is so sure of his love, he's talking marriage. Alec is 3 years old; so, too, is his fiancée. They met in preschool. They place their little chairs next to each other during story time, swing together on the playground, and share the chocolate chips plucked from their cookies during snack time. ...

One day, Alec's father picked him up from preschool. The father was eager to meet the potential little bride so he asked Alec to point her out to him. Just as she was climbing into her mother's minivan, she turned, grinned at Alec, and called a warm "See ya."

The father admitted he was a bit stunned to see that this dear little girl was exceedingly cross-eyed and wore very thick glasses. As he drove away, Alec commented dreamily, "Isn't she beautiful?"

Turn with me to our scripture passage in your bulletin. We are going to read about another man who fell in love, but he wasn't as gracious as Alec.

Cast of characters:

Jacob is running away from a bad home situation (by the way, created by Jacob), and is running to his Uncle Laban, whom he has never met. Uncle Laban has two daughters, Rachel and Leah. Jacob, accidentally, meets one of them as he gets close to Laban's home. He meets Rachel at the local well.

The local well was a great pick-up place in the Bible. You could say it was the "bar" of biblical times. Jacob meets Rachel, and it is love at first sight for Jacob. And it is just like in the movies: he takes one look at Rachel, and with a rush of testosterone, he rolls the stone away from the mouth of the well. It's a one-man show to impress his new beloved.

Jacob begins to work for Laban, Rachel's father. A month goes by, and Jacob shares shy glances and a few words with his beloved. This is where we pick up our scripture passage.

Read Genesis 29:14b – 20

Oh, that last line...doesn't it just get you right here (point to my heart)? It reminds me of the line in "Jerry McQuire" where Tom Cruise says to his love, "You complete me." Who says the Bible is not romantic!

Let me tell you what happens to Jacob. On Jacob's wedding night, Laban substitutes Leah for Rachel, and Jacob consummates the marriage with Leah. Now, I don't know how Jacob missed that one. Was it dark in the room? Maybe Jacob had too much to drink at the wedding celebration. Or, he was just too eager and didn't think to check.

But when morning comes, the scripture says, "there was Leah!" in Jacob's bed. Jacob runs to Laban and says, "What is this you have done?" And Laban innocently says he must marry off the older daughter first before Rachel can get married. He is telling this to Jacob now? Laban had seven years to tell this little fact to Jacob, but somehow neglected to do so.

But, Laban had a plan. Go on your one-week honeymoon, Laban says to Jacob, and when you come back, I will give you Rachel, but you must work for me another 7 years. And scripture says, "And Jacob did so."

Can you imagine what that honeymoon was like? Three times in this chapter it says that Jacob loved Rachel. And the last time it says, "he loved Rachel more than Leah." Let's just keep rubbing it in!

Once on an Andy Griffith show there was a beautiful young lady that Andy was talking to, and he commented that she looked like God had spent a lot of time on her. Apparently, God did not spend a lot of time on Leah.

We get a clue what life was like for Leah. God was noticing her situation, and the scripture says, “When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.” Ha, more than one can place at this game!

As Leah names her children, we get a glimpse of what marriage was like for her. The first son that she conceives she names Reuben, which means “God has seen my misery.” And she says, “Surely my husband will love me now.”

Her second son she names Simeon, which means “one who hears.” And Leah says, “Because the Lord heard I am not loved,” God gave me another son.

She conceives again – another son. She names him Levi, which means “attached.” And Leah says, “Maybe now my husband will be attached to me because I have given him three sons.”

Oh, how Leah longed for her husband to love her. Obviously, he wasn’t staying away because she was having all these children! But she was not loved.

Then something changes. She has a fourth son. She names him Judah, which means “praise.” And she says, “This time I will praise the Lord.” She is beginning to see the richness of her situation. Leah may have a plain face, but her disposition is lovely, and her faith is deep.

What about Rachel? How is she reacting to all of this? Remember, she is barren. She is so jealous that Leah has children and she has none that she goes to Jacob and says, “Give me a child, or I will die!” The beautiful Rachel is turning out to be someone not so easy to live with.

She is so jealous that she decides to conceive children through her maidservant, and gives her maid to Jacob. What male can refuse such an offer? The maidservant bears a son. Rachel names him Dan, which means “God has vindicated me.”

The maidservant has another son. Rachel names him Naphtali (NAF ta lie), which

means “my struggle.” And Rachel says, “I have won my struggle with my sister.”

Beauty is only skin-deep?

Our passage describes Leah in this way: Leah’s eyes were weak. Translators are not really sure what this word for “weak” really means in the Hebrew. For those who translate the word as “weak, they say there was something “off” about Leah, something wrong.

Other translations, however, use a different word instead of weak. They say, “Leah’s eyes were lovely.” Translators have to choose what they see in Leah. Do they see her weakness, or her loveliness? Jacob chose to see her weakness.

When you see people, what do you see first? Their weakness? Or, their loveliness? Leah always lived in the shadow of her beautiful sister. How often we bypass and overlook the less lovely, the less gifted, the socially inept, the quiet and shy one, the weak.

Isn’t it Jesus who tells us, and shows us, to reach out to those that our culture ignores, or shuns, or looks down upon? Didn’t Jesus reach out to the mentally disturbed, the sick, the unclean, the poor, the slaves, the outcasts? He saw their loveliness.

May God forgive us for forgetting that these people are beautiful in God’s sight. Will you choose to love the flawed people in your life? What can you do to notice the worth of each person you meet? Will you look for their loveliness?

There are clues that Jacob learned to love Leah; that he actually learned to see her loveliness. Rachel eventually becomes pregnant. She gives birth to Joseph...of Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat fame.

Rachel becomes pregnant a second time, but dies in childbirth...and she is buried on the side of a road. When Leah dies, she is buried in the family plot. And when Jacob dies, per his instructions, he is placed next to Leah. Jacob recognizes Leah not as a blight, but as a blessing.

Back to Alec, our little 3-year old who loved a cross-eyed girl with thick glasses, and thought her beautiful. Alec's father writes, "*So like God...we often say love is blind, but God's love sees all our imperfections and, like Alec, says, 'Isn't she beautiful?'*"

If you are one of those who has always been shunned because people didn't take the time to look past your outside, and look into your soul and see your loveliness, God notices. Just like God noticed Leah. God not only gave Leah many children, but one of her sons, Judah, is in line to the Messiah. And another son's future children become the priests of the nation of Israel. The Levites.

"For the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7)

As followers of Jesus Christ, may we choose to see the loveliness of all those we meet. Amen