

SNOW CAMP – 2018 – Rock Springs Evangelical Free Church

Saturday Morning Message – March 24, 2018

OVERCOMING YOUR DREAD OF DISAPPROVAL:

The Fear of Rejection – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Genesis 29: 15-30 read by Nate Wollman

Mark 3: 7-21 and 31-35 – read by Preston Ackerman

Each of us long to belong to each other. We long for relationship, acceptance, and fellowship. Being rejected is too much for any of us to bear. We easily fall into the trap of being controlled by the approval of others. Rejection wounds us deeply. It can happen on a school playground. Remember two popular kids choosing up sides? Were you ever the last one still standing? As you stood there rejected, one of the leaders said, “Who cares?! You can be on my team too.” Today, God has led me to an Old Testament young girl who was despised and rejected, unloved. Her name was Leah, the elder daughter of Laban. Turn with me to this pitiful story of rejection in the Old Testament, turn to Genesis 29: 15-30 that Nate read to us. Jacob, who deceived his brother, Esau, ran away from home to save his skin. He arrived at his uncle Laban’s house, his mother Rebekah’s brother. Jacob decided to stay and work for Laban. He was head over heels in love with Laban’s younger daughter, Rachel, who was beautiful beyond description to him.

Leah, Rachel’s older sister, is a sad, yet perfect example of what it means to be rejected. God designed us all for healthy, encouraging connectivity to Him and to each other. We long to belong. We hunger to belong. Without acceptance in our lives, our souls and spirits starve, wither, and die. Leah experienced rejection and the fear of it in her life. She was the older daughter to Laban and the older sister to Rachel. Jacob fell in love with Rachel, not Leah, and asked to marry Rachel. Laban agreed on the condition that Jacob first work for him for seven years. The Bible gives some indication why Jacob chose Rachel over Leah. We read, “Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful.” (Genesis 29:17)

How did Jacob get duped, by Laban, giving him the wrong woman, his older daughter, Leah to be his wife? We need to know that back then, as now, in the mid-east, women were largely veiled and usually all a man might notice of a young woman is her eyes. In my trip to India, I saw in one of the seven rich Emirate States, in the capital of Doha, Qatar, hundreds of Islamic, African and Arabic women. The only part of their face and body visible, is their eyes. At the wedding, supposedly of Rachel to Jacob, all Jacob could see was his bride’s eyes. To Jacob, Leah did not have attractive eyes, but on that wedding night, Jacob didn’t look as closely in his bride’s face as he might have. With a flowing garment on, and her face covered, Laban had Leah decked out to the nines, as Jacob’s bride. Leah’s outward appearance was in noticeable contrast to Rachel’s beauty. Yet on that

marriage night, can you imagine the pain and rejection Leah felt as she, the older daughter, who had been overlooked and by-passed by Jacob, was being forced deceptively upon Jacob in marriage? A wedding night should be a time of joy and gladness, fulfillment, and passionate longing. Leah tasted the bitterness of rejection. After seven years of Jacob's hard working to win Leah's younger sister, Rachel, there Leah was, part of her dad's scheme foisted on her, to be married off. If the scheme worked, Jacob would learn the truth by morning. Laban's treachery worked. Jacob thought he married Rachel. In the darkness of their wedding chamber that night, Leah never said, "I am not Rachel." Jacob, who himself had been such a deceiver, before God changed him, was himself, totally deceived. He consummated his marriage to the wrong woman, Leah, not Rachel.

When morning came, Jacob was shocked to find that his bride in bed with him, was Leah. Jacob put up a terrible fuss. He argued with Laban about this bum deal of getting the wrong wife. Laban made another deal. He wanted more work out of Jacob. Laban agreed, that after Jacob and Leah would endure the traditional bridal week together—their honeymoon, which had to be a tragedy for both Jacob and Leah, then Jacob would be allowed to marry Rachel, the woman he loved "more than Leah." But the deal was, he had to promise to work seven more years for Rachel. This poor rejected wife, Leah, experienced the wretched pain first of her father's rejection. Think about it! Leah's dad, Laban, as much as told her she was a burden to get rid of. Laban in his deception of Jacob was saying, "Leah, you are so unlovely that no one in their right mind would want to love you or marry you; so, I must deceive Jacob into marrying you."

Parent's rejection can be devastating to our souls and spirits. Once experienced, rejection instills in us a fear of more rejection in the future. Leah was a beautiful woman as are all of you ladies here at Snow Camp 2018. God makes no mistakes, but Leah didn't know it, and sadly, some of you young ladies here at Snow Camp may not feel that you are lovely. God has so constructed us as men and women that we as men are handsome to the woman God has for us, and you as young ladies, are gorgeous to the man God means for you to marry. Rachel was not to be in the Godly line of Jesus, born of the virgin, Mary. Jesus would come from the fourth son of Jacob and Leah—named Judah. Leah didn't know all this. What she knew only was what it was like to feel alone even when she was married. She understood being rejected in the most vulnerable of circumstances—as a married woman. Some of you here at Snow Camp 2018 may feel rejected like Leah. When we feel rejected, we often also know the futility of looking for love in all the wrong places.

What did Leah do, as her dad rejected her and then Jacob rejected her too? Leah first started looking for love in the wrong place. She tried to find her primary source of acceptance in people—especially in her husband, Jacob. Jacob stayed

married to Leah, but he didn't love her. Genesis 29: 31 says, "When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren." In the middle of Leah's being rejected, God showed her His own loving acceptance and the blessing of becoming pregnant and giving birth—which is one of the greatest gifts in all the world. God was saying, "I love you, Leah!" Leah didn't get it. When Leah gave birth to Reuben, her firstborn, she said, "The Lord has looked upon my affliction; now my husband will love me." Yet, Jacob didn't love her. Then she bore Jacob a second son, Simeon. Leah again said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, He has given me this son also." Jacob still didn't love her. Then Leah conceived again, and she bore a third son, Levi. This time she said, "Now this time, my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." But Jacob still didn't show Leah his love.

Even today, a wife in a difficult marriage may conceive and say, "This child will bring my husband and me together. My husband will finally love me now." But often, as with Jacob, it doesn't work. Teenagers often cling to a boyfriend or girlfriend, desperately hoping not to lose love and acceptance. Many will walk on eggshells, so they can belong. Many young men and women do all kinds of immoral acts, hoping their compromises will keep them from being rejected. Our problem is that we seek love and acceptance primarily in people. No person, even the most loving person, can ever truly meet our deepest needs for acceptance and love. Love from people is vital. We hurt without it. But our primary source must never be people. It must be God! Leah was slow in learning this lesson. Yet, finally Leah received God's ultimate acceptance, His eternal embrace. She found what she needed most. Leah moved past her fear of rejection to faith in the Lord. When God granted Leah a fourth son, she stopped looking primarily to her husband Jacob for love and acceptance. Now she looked to the Lord.

When Judah was born, instead of saying "My husband will love me now," she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." (Genesis 29:35) Leah fell into God's embrace. She no longer feared rejection. She felt confident in God's love and acceptance, though Jacob overlooked her. Leah now was empowered to overcome her fear of rejection, knowing nothing could or would ever separate her from the love of God. (Romans 8:39) Who was Judah? Through Judah, our Savior, Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah came. We all have fears of rejection. We let our fear of rejection prevent us from fulfilling God's dreams for us. We must learn the right way to overcome our fear of rejection. Let's turn to the example of our own Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 3: 7-21, and 31-35. No one was ever more despised and rejected than Jesus was, once even by His own mother and brothers. It is in this second text that Preston read, that we find God's way to overcome our dread of disapproval, our fear of rejection.

We read that after choosing his disciples, early in His ministry, Jesus decided to go home to Nazareth to visit his family members. Let's get to the answer. How can I overcome rejection in my life? Were Mary, Jesus' mother and His brothers rejecting Jesus? Absolutely! Our best answer for overcoming the fear of rejection is not found in Leah, but in Jesus. Are you thinking, I don't measure up to others here at Snow Camp? I am not worth much. Stop! What did Jesus do? Jesus had been preaching a bold new message of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, casting out demons who were falling before Him and were saying, "You are the Son of God." (Mark 3: 11) Jesus decided to go back home to Nazareth. Going home is the hardest place to find honor. When Jesus got to Nazareth, word spread He was back and He was invited into a home to eat. Word spread quickly. The house filled to overflowing with a crowd gathered to hear Him—so thick no one could eat. His mother Mary and His brothers heard of it. With determination, they headed to welcome Jesus home, to embrace Him and tell Him how proud they were of Him, right? No, they came to restrain Him. They were saying, "He is out of His mind." Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem told the Jewish leaders there—"Jesus is possessed with the prince of demons, Beelzebul."

The Jewish leaders hated and rejected Jesus. He was healing the sick, forgiving sins, saying He was the Lord of the Sabbath, calling disciples to Himself, saying, "Follow Me," and casting out demons. The Pharisees' lies spread to Jesus' family. They rejected His identity. They thought Jesus had fallen off the deep end, that He was losing it, saying He was Messiah, the Christ prophesied to come. His family grew up with Him and they bought into Pharisees' lies. Mary and Jesus' brothers wouldn't go into the house, but they sent word for Jesus to come out to them. "Your Mom and brothers want a word with you." They were ready to say, "You are out of Your mind. Come home, rest, and get a grip." For Mary, Jesus' mother to have doubts and worries about who Jesus was, wow! Have you ever felt what Jesus felt, the sting of the rejection of people in your own family? How did Jesus deal with rejection? He answered, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" Looking around Him, Jesus said, "Here are My mother and my brothers." Jesus was overcoming His rejection by His mother, brothers, and many in His home town. How did He overcome? His example gives us two critical ways. How?

WE OVERCOME OUR FEAR OF REJECTION BY REMINDING OURSELF OF OUR IDENTITY WITH THE LORD. (I.)

Jesus knew He was born of Mary. He knew his step brothers and sisters. But Jesus knew a deeper identity, as the Son of God, God's own beloved Son. For Jesus, what his mother and brothers thought about Him that day, was insignificant compared to what His Father thought about Him. What if we base our identity and our sense of worth ultimately from our parents? What happens if they die? What if our parents or brothers and sisters or sons and daughters reject us? How do we overcome this

rejection? Is our worth based on what we do or accomplish? In 1963-67, I could dunk a basketball with both hands. I can't do that now. If we lose our health, our abilities, if a family member rejects us, or we are rejected at school, who are we? We overcome our fear of rejection by knowing who we are in Jesus. As born-again believers, we can say, "I am a child of God." Jesus heard it at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son. In Him I am well pleased." If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8: 31. Do you know your identity in Jesus? You can today! Do you need to come to Jesus to find out how wonderful you really are to Him? Then you will be able to overcome rejection every time it hits.

I remember when our children were born. I remember holding Amy in my arms, then Heather, Gretchen, then the twins, Audrey and Aaron, Nathaniel and finally Amanda. Jinny and I were crazy in love with them then. There is nothing they can do to stop our loving them. They could sin terribly, and devastate us by their awful sins, but we could never stop loving them. God's love for you and me, is infinitely beyond any father or mother's love. Our children need never fear our rejection. How much safer are we in the love of Jesus! The Bible says in II Timothy 2: 13, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." In Hebrews 13: 5, Jesus says, "I will never leave you nor forsake or reject you." Stop thinking God hates you or rejects you. God is love. We read in I John 4: 18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." I stand before you today, not because of what you think of me, if you love me, or you don't. I stand here because I know who I am in Jesus. I belong to Jesus. He fully accepts me. Jesus is watching me, praying for me, and holding me up now. He is crazy in love with me, more than I can imagine. I am His and He is mine. Jesus doesn't treasure me for what I do, but for who I am. If you know Jesus, it's no different for you. Jesus not only would die for you. He did die on the cross to save you, to pay the penalty for your sin, and to redeem each of you from your destiny in hell. When we come to Jesus, Romans 8: 15 is clear, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons and daughters, by whom we cry, "Abba, (Daddy) Father!" Romans 8: 16 promises us we are "children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Just as Jesus belongs to His Father, God, so each of us who know Jesus, belong to God the Father. First, we overcome our fear of rejection by reminding ourselves we are sons and daughters of God. Secondly,

WE OVERCOME OUR FEAR OF REJECTION BY REMINDING OURSELF OF OUR CALL AND MISSION FROM GOD. (I.)

To overcome our rejection and fear of rejection, let's see what Jesus had to say as a twelve-year old. We may have some 12-year-olds here at Snow Camp. Do you remember when Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem by Mary and Jesus step-dad, Joseph. They traveled in a caravan of relatives and acquaintances—Luke 2: 41-52. After a day's journey, Jesus was missing. Mary and Joseph left the group traveling home to

Nazareth to go back to Jerusalem. When they got to Jerusalem, that was day 2 not knowing where Jesus was. Finally, in Jerusalem, after 3 days searching for Jesus, on day 5, they found Jesus. Mary and Joseph were about wild by now. When they found Him, He was seated among the teachers of the Law in the temple, listening and asking them questions. All who heard Jesus were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When Mary and Joseph saw Him, Mary lit into Him. His mother said, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” Jesus answered, “Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” They did not understand. Now Jesus went with them back to Nazareth, as it was His Father’s business for him to be submissive to them. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Jesus knew not only who He was, but why He was here, from a child, working in His Father’s business—a cosmic enterprise.

How do we overcome rejection? We base our worth not only on who we are in God’s family, but in His call of what He wants us to do—that’s why we are here on earth. People may ask you, “why don’t your curse and swear?” Your answer is, “It’s because of the Family Business I am in.” As Jesus said at Nazareth, “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” Not everyone will approve of who we are and what we do, or what God’s call is for us, but we know as God’s children, we are on a mission. Why do we forgive others, why do we share our story, why do we refrain from pre-marital sex as believers, why do we stay away from alcohol and drugs, why do we faithfully go to church and worship the Lord, why do spend time praying for others we love to receive Jesus? It’s all because of our call—our mission, the Family Business we are in. We are ambassadors for Jesus—on assignment. Why don’t we watch horror movies, pornography, why don’t we gamble, why don’t we text naked pictures to each other as thousands of teens do, why do we try to keep our friends from suicide? It’s because of our call. We belong to Jesus and we have a job to do, and if the world rejects us, it’s like water off a duck’s back. So-what! We aren’t out to please people. We are all about pleasing God, because we are in love with Jesus.

Pastor Claude Alexander, in Charlotte, North Carolina, says it best, “There are questions that beg to be answered. There are dilemmas to be overcome. There are gaps to be filled, and the challenge is for you to fill them... There is a purpose for your being here. You are meant to answer something, solve something, provide something, lead something, discover something, compose something, write something, say something, translate something, interpret something, sing something, create something, teach something, preach something, bear something, overcome something, and in doing so, you improve the lives of others under the power of God, for the glory of God.” Why? Because you know who you are and why you are here, and you’re no longer a slave to the fear of rejection. Amen.