

Genesis 29:31-35

Mother's Day 2023.

### The Unloved Leah

I prepared today's message for Mother's Day. We all really want to be loved, don't we? From this viewpoint, today's message is not only for mothers, but it is a common theme regardless of gender, age, social status, or educational level. Through the story of Leah in today's text, I pray that it will be a comfort to wives and husbands whose marriages are not going well, including myself and my friends and relatives who are suffering from the wounds of their relationship, and to other friends who have been rejected by their lovers and have no choice but to become single after missing their marriage.

Recently, it is also reported that at this time, the youth are running away from home and gathering in Kabukicho, Shinjuku, and getting involved in crimes. It pains my heart to think of them who are wandering around, unloved by their parents. There are also many people in Japan today who have joined cults such as the former Unification Church and have had their noble faith and love for God taken advantage of. I pray that through today's message, all of us will come into contact with the true love of God.

We Christians are fortunate to believe that God has a plan for our life journey, even when there are hardships in our lives. However, this plan of God is so grand that it takes time to understand. Perhaps we may never know God's plan while we are still alive.

The stories of Sarah who is the mother of faith, Esther who is the princess, and Ruth who the Gentile woman, are well known. But today's Leah is a woman who does not get much attention in the Bible. Leah is the first wife of Jacob who is the grandson of Abraham, the father of faith. This Leah's life was one of being totally unloved and rejected. In Genesis 29, we find Leah in a miserable situation.

First of all, Leah was not blessed with a father. Leah's father, Laban, was a deceitful and sly man. Laban was scheming to get his hardworking nephew, Jacob, to be his son-in-law. He made Jacob work for him for seven years after Jacob promised to give him his beloved youngest daughter, Rachel. By the way, despite Laban's scheming, Jacob truly loved Rachel so much that he spent the seven years as if they were days. Some people, like Jacob, are pure in their love. How happy Rachel must have been! The Bible says that Rachel was beautiful and had a lovely figure(vers17). Rachel's figure might have been like Fujiwara Norika and her face like Yoshinaga Sayuri. ^^

Anyway, Jacob worked hard for seven years and finally married Rachel and had a honeymoon. It must have seemed like a dream. However, the next morning, something terrible happened! In the morning, when Jacob awoke from sleep, he saw not Rachel, but Rachel's sister, Leah! Jacob could not believe his eyes. When he looked her again, it was not Rachel, but really Leah.

How did Jacob feel? Oh dear! Sheesh! But what we must not forget here is how Leah felt. How was Leah feeling? The Bible says of Leah, she had weak eyes. Even just 100 years ago in Japan, girls with glasses were teased for not being pretty enough. Since these were ancient women, Leah would not have been a beauty. In any case, not many women in this world would have beaten Sayuri Yoshinaga, so Leah lost out to her sister Rachel's beauty.

Her father Laban, who did this terrible thing, never said a word of apology to his oldest daughter Leah. He used Leah to keep Jacob, a hard worker, for another seven years. Sneaky Laban used his daughter Leah to keep Jacob working for free totally for 14 years. And as for Jacob, her husband, actually loved Rachel more than Leah, so he knowingly accepted his uncle Laban's wicked plan. Oh, how terrible this father and husband do! How heartless they are! Leah was deeply hurt. Her life became miserable suddenly. Cynically her husband Jacob's love was stolen by her own sister Rachel.

But, ladies and gentlemen, who was watching this miserable situation? Look at verse 31: "When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless." Life is strange, isn't it? Leah can have children but not be loved. Rachel can be loved but cannot have a child. We don't know clearly if this situation can be called fair. Unfortunately, they are sisters who grew up in the same house, but live completely different lives.

Now, finally, the competition between the sisters for the love of their husbands has begun. Leah fights for her husband's love with a trump card that only she can play. She had to give birth to a child for her husband Jacob. This would be an ancient way of doing things. If it were today, you might dress up and cook a delicious meal for your husband or lover. If you were a child, it might be studying hard for your parents' approval. A new employee who has just been hired might work overtime until midnight to gain the approval of his or her boss. Anyway, we work hard because we really want them to approve of us and love us. We are not half-hearted. We do our best with everything we have.

Leah did her best and, happily, she became pregnant with her first son. She gave birth to Reuben. With her first son, I imagine that she endured 22 hours of labor and gave birth to her firstborn son, Reuben. However, her husband Jacob did not praise Leah's efforts. He loved his sister Rachel more than Leah.

Years later, Leah became pregnant again, this time with her second child, but she was careless because it was her second pregnancy, and she was hospitalized for two weeks for suspected threatened abortion after taking too much work. This time she also gave birth to her second son, Simeon, in a difficult labor. Leah hoped that this would be the time that her husband would love her, but he didn't and she was disappointed.

While raising her first and second sons, who fought constantly, she became pregnant again. It was a difficult pregnancy, partly due to the fatigue of raising children on a regular basis and partly due to severe morning sickness. She gave birth to her third son, Levi. After giving birth to Levi, Leah thought to herself, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." (Vers.34) But still Jacob loved only her sister Rachel.

We, like Leah, want to be loved, but we may experience that our efforts are not rewarded. Many people experience hurt because they are not loved. Leah's husband did not love her even though she gave birth to three boys. Leah's marriage was a failure. But God loved Leah in a special way. Look again at verse 31. God saw that Leah was not loved by Jacob. God sees all of our misery in the past, present, and future. And God loved Leah very much. Isaiah 43:4, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you." God considered Leah to be precious and valuable. God loved Leah so much that He waited every day for her to turn to Him. God wanted to have a loving fellowship with Leah. And God had great plans for her life that she did not even know about. God wanted to make Leah His holy people and priest.

But she did not understand this kind of God's plan. Expecting only the love of her husband, she continued to bear three children. But Leah finally turned her attention to God; see verse 35. "She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'This time I will praise the Lord.'" So, she named the child Judah. Then she stopped having children. Leah was disappointed that she was not loved despite her efforts even though she gave birth to her fourth child, Judah. At that time, Leah finally paid attention to God. She praised God. She thanked God. And she looked up to God rather than seeking her husband's love.

Leah lost the battle for her husband with Rachel. But Leah won the world. God saw Leah's miserable life where her husband Jacob did not love her. And He had a wonderful plan through Leah. It was something that Leah had no idea about before she died. Among Leah's children, her second son Levi grew up with the tribe of Levi and later became a holy priest. His fourth son Judah spread as the tribe of Judah, and David, the king of Israel, was born, and later the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, was born from the lineage of Judah. A son of Leah was placed in the genealogy of Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Leah could not have imagined that her descendants would be great while she was alive. Hebrews 11:39, "There were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised." This was because it was after Leah had died. But Leah finally came to faith after giving birth to her fourth child, Judah, and found God in her life. And she praised God. She thanked God. It must have taken Leah roughly 15 or 16 years to be able to praise in this way.

How about us? How can we praise God in this situation? We may think, "How can we praise God in this situation?" But let us praise God now. Let us be thankful now! One day God will make everything beautiful. Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose." The older we get, the more regrets we have. "Oh, I shouldn't have done this, I shouldn't have done that, etc." But God makes everything in our lives wonderful without any regrets. He turns all our failures and wasted efforts into the good. Even he uses our failures and betrayals and makes them for the good. In Genesis 49:31, Jacob leaves a will to his sons before he goes to heaven. He asks that they bury him with Leah. Jacob, who did not love his wife Leah when he was young, loved her in his last days.

Do you think people do not love you? I want to testify about me. I worked really hard to have a happy marriage. Both in work and raising children. I really did the best I could. But it didn't work out. In the end, when my first son was 3 years old and my second son was 1 year old, my 10-year marriage fell apart. I suffered with this wound for 15 or 16 years, but I am thankful that I got my ex-husband to meet my children a year ago and now we are reconciled. I may be going to tell you a little shocking story from now on, but please be assured that it is not a criticism of my ex-husband. Just I want to give testimony that God is healing my deep wounds.

Very recently in February I went to Kyobunkan, Christian book stores in Ginza. I enjoyed buying some books and was going home. There is always a flower shop near the Kyobunkan. At that time, I noticed many white flowers called "Marguerit" on display. But when I saw the white marguerites, I suddenly felt sad. "Oh, God Father, why do I still feel sad about that event, even now that I am becoming more faithful?" I sobbed in my heart.

This reminded me of my first birthday, 25 years ago, when I was married. It was a special birthday for my first year of marriage. I asked my loving husband for marguerites, my favorite flower, as a birthday present. When he came home, he had some marguerites in his hand. I was very happy. But then my husband said, "You know how long it took me to find your Marguerites!" and he threw them into the hallway. After that, I never bought marguerites again.

However, the painful memory of 25 years ago, which I thought I had forgotten in front of a flower shop in Ginza, made me sad and almost brought tears to my eyes. However, ladies and gentlemen, it was at this point that I heard a loving voice from my heart. He said, "Yoko, marguerites are wild flowers. They are cheap things you can find anywhere. I think gorgeous roses would suit with you." I quickly realized that this voice in my heart was God's. After that, I looked at the roses displayed next to Marguerites and was smiling in my mind. There were yellow roses and bright red roses on display. Expensive Ginza roses that cost six or seven hundred yen each(6-7dollars)! I thought that God Father was humorous. And even though I've never bought roses for myself, my heart was getting glad.

Weeks after this, there were many marguerites blooming around the subway station. By the way, even though I saw them, I was not sad at all. I realized that God was watching the painful event 25 years ago that was made me lonely and alone. And as He said to Leah, Isaiah 43:4, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you." It was as if He was saying this to me as well. God loves me and has completely healed my wounds.

About 2000 years ago Jesus Christ came into the world because He loved us. [John 3:16](#) "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God gave the life of His only Son, Jesus to save us. This love of God is necessary for both the beloved Rachel and the unloved Leah. The love of Jesus is so great that it cannot be compared to the love we receive from others. I pray that all of us here may believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. I pray that we will receive God's love every day and live our lives walking with hope.

Let us pray together. Beloved Heavenly Father. I did not know you before. I am sorry. I accept and believe in you now. Forgive me of my sins. I love You and entrust my life to You. Please make my life as wonderful as Leah's. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.