

## Sermon Transcript

### The Big, Yellow House

**Genesis 25:19-34 and Luke 12:9-11 | Sixth Sunday After Pentecost | July 20, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter, preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

In the beloved movie, *Matilda*, based on the Roald Dahl book, one of the important supporting characters to Matilda is Miss Honey.

She sees the potential in Matilda, the youngest in her family who has a knack for learning and doesn't quite fit in her family. Miss Honey becomes her mother figure especially to defend Matilda from her from own family and the headmistress, Miss Trunchbull.

Embeth Daviditz played Miss Honey in the 1996 movie. As her own children grew up, she was a recognizable figure for her role in *Matilda*. She recalled that people would come up to her all the time gushing about how great she was in her role as Miss Honey.

However, her son, Asher, didn't always see that side of his mother.

Daviditz recounted that, "If I'd say, 'You are in a timeout,' or [tell him the] consequences for misbehavior, he'd go, 'You're so mean. The next time someone comes up and tells me that they love you as Miss Honey, I'm going to tell them that you're nothing like her!'"

Of course, her son grew up and realized that his mom was just being a mom—definitely not a Miss Trunchbull.

Being a parent means doing the hard things. Enforcing discipline and setting an example. Being a Miss Honey still carries responsibility with it.

As we waited for Oliver to get prepped for surgery on Tuesday morning, I had one of those parent moments—feeling the weight of doing something hard for our kiddo.

I haven't shared much about his surgery, or how risky it was. We've been waiting for a long time—it was scheduled in January because it's such a long procedure—it took the full day on the surgeon's calendar.

His back was curving so much that without the surgery, he'd continue to be in tremendous pain until the pressure on his organs was too overwhelming. He

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needed one of these. One of my friends texted, “what’s up with Oliver becoming Wolverine”

As the anesthesiologist entered the room, he looked at us and then down at Oliver and started to talk through the procedure. Then he stopped. Dramatically, he closed the door and got a super serious look on his face.

He had that look—that come to Jesus kinda look—like, you know what we’re about to do, right?

It was clear that this surgery made him nervous—would Oliver’s bones be strong enough, would he lose too much blood, would he be able to get enough access points to keep him sedated and manage his pain.

If Oliver could talk, after hearing what the doctor said, I’m sure he would’ve said, something to the effect of “you’re nothing like Miss Honey!” to us.

It was scary.

But, we knew the alternative.

We were ready. So we waited.

The struggle of parenting is a familiar topic in the scripture, too.

One of the most important narratives of Genesis is the origin story of Jacob—eventually he’ll be called Israel.

But Jacob is not the first born. Not the birth heir of Isaac and Rebekah.

Nope, that’s Esau. The stronger, hairier, provider.

Isaac and Rebekah experience infertility and when she does become pregnant, the sibling rivalry begins in the womb—and as the writer of the story provides foreshadowing—the elder shall serve the younger.

Isaac favors the eldest, Esau. Jacob is a mamma’s boy for Rebekah. A decision in their earlier years will impact their futures—when Jacob manipulates Esau into giving him the birthright. Essentially, trying to reverse history and make Jacob the firstborn. It was part of the culture that the firstborn was favored, both in inheritance and blessing.

Jacob steals what honestly shouldn’t belong to him. This sets off events in the story that we’ll explore in August.

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The story of Jacob and Esau has profoundly influenced western literature's treatment of sibling rivalry and parental favoritism, says Professor Amy Willis.

She explains that “When I teach these narratives, my students often think that Jacob victimizes Esau. They read Esau’s comment in verse 32 quite literally and think that Jacob is trading on Esau’s dire situation. In fact, Esau has just come in from hunting.

He is not starving to death, he just prefers immediate gratification over the long term benefits of his birthright. His family inheritance, which in this story is tied to the covenant promises, means little to him.

**Esau may not value his familial and spiritual inheritance, but Jacob does. Moreover, Jacob doesn’t see any immediate reward for his efforts; it will be decades before he actually sees success. Jacob is not deterred by the prospect of delayed gratification.**

It feels like some of the actions would be impossible to overcome. How could Esau ever forgive his brother? How could Jacob be so focused on the long-term plans?

It can be a guide for us. This encounter is not a morality tale. It’s not about good versus evil. It does show us that the Bible is complicated, but it shows real relationships and real struggles.

Maybe that’s what matters. Maybe it’s enough to know that the story is ongoing—that God’s presence can be felt in not giving up on Esau—that his life is still blessed, whether or not a brother stole it.

That Jacob will continue to wrestle with God, throughout his life, is a great way for us to see that the Bible is rarely black and white—the way we understand God can be complex.

And maybe that’s where my understanding of God is this week (**slide of Oliver, post surgery**). I’m on a rollercoaster of nerves.

I’ve been so grateful for the ways that this congregation and Oliver’s community has surrounded him. For your response of prayers and support.

Prayers for the surgery, prayers for pain management, prayers for our family. It’s an ongoing thing. Oliver still has obstacles in front of him that were unforeseen and make the path forward complicated.

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Oliver has taught me a lot in his 17 years. Life isn't always what you expect. We can plan, but when we look back, we will be surprised at how things actually turn out.

I think Oliver's story reminds me that the family that surrounds you is a lot bigger than the ones that live under our roof.

There's a large painting in the common room at the Ronald McDonald House at Gillette. As you go to grab some food or a coffee or some respite, there's a reminder of why this space exists.

This space is for family's who are weary from the journey—or those overwhelmed by what they're facing. When you sit down, you see this (SLIDE of yellow house).

**If I were a house, I would be a big yellow house. With a yellow so inviting that if you were to walk by, just being you, it would call to you, "Come in, you and your heart, sit down." And if you did come into that big, yellow, inviting house, you'd know you were home."**

Will Jacob and Esau find a way to be home again? Will they find invitation and reconciliation?

Miss Honey's classroom was like the big yellow house. A place of welcome and safety for all her students.

When Oliver got home yesterday, his siblings were so excited. Our home has a different energy when Oliver is gone.

And Faith, we serve as that big yellow house. People should see us and know, you are welcome here. Be with God. For Hana and Lincoln, baptized today. May they know the feeling of God's presence in them as they grow up.

This place is home. Home to support one another in our pain, grief, and healing. Home to support neighbors who are hungry or unsheltered. Home to welcome our loving God—the God who we sometimes might wanna scream at and say, "you're no Miss Honey"—while knowing that all that we face, God faces with us.

God cares about us so deeply that God put all of us together to care for each other. Amen.