Sermon: **“Jacob saw Esau coming with his 400 men, so…”** (Genesis 33.1)

TV thriller series leaving you with a cliff-hanger. So with this story! TEXT. What happened next?

Jacob prepares with favoured Rachel at the rear of various groups, to protect her if anything goes wrong. Jacob is obviously frightened. Esau greets him warmly, unexpectedly.

After a brief conversation Esau wants to accompany Jacob to Edom many miles away, even offering to leave some men with him, but Jacob refuses, and instead of following stops at Sukkoth, just a mile away.

Jacob does not trust the seemingly trustworthy Esau. They only met once more, at their father’s funeral.

You would have thought if God was to choose between them, Esau would be the one.

Jacob’s life is full of trickery and suspicion, not good traits. Yet Jacob chosen by God as father of a nation.

What do we make of all this?

[1] There are times when **we are like Jacob** – not trusting the motives of others. TEXT.

Imagine going round Countdown and offering $20 to everyone – some would take, but not everyone,

“There’s a catch in it, somewhere, if only I could find it…” Exactly what Jacob felt. If it had been him he would have got his own back as he (kind of) did with his Uncle Laban (read Genesis 30.25 – 31.20)

Looking for the catch may *sometimes* be appropriate when dealing with fallible humans, though should not be the default position. Sadly this attitude can spill over into our attitude towards God.

[2] There are times when **we are like Esau** – forgiving when having every right not to do so. Has this been your experience? And was the one forgiven like Jacob – who did not really believe it?

Forgiveness leaves us vulnerable to repeat offenders, or those who take advantage. But NB Matthew 6.14f.

There is a balance between being ‘forgiving & vulnerable’ and being ‘forgiving & naïve’. Someone who has stolen in the past: with the former we might allow them to be on the Finance Committee; with the latter we could make them treasurer.

When thinking of the End of Life Choice Bill referendum we are caught between trust and mistrust – we can see that someone in great pain might be right to want to end their life, but others (patients and/or family) might manipulate, or coerce, or have hidden agendas. What is the right action? What place has forgiveness?

Whether we are more like Jacob or Esau, God loves us and when faced with who to vote for and the two referendums we still need to ask: What would Christ do?