

One of the challenges of being a priest is sometimes I am asked to help people makes sense of the senseless. Many times such moments begin with a question like what is God's will in all of this?

Usually such questions are asked in moments of great disappointment, or in the depths of mourning, or turmoil.

Honestly, I rarely have a good answer. But over the years I have learned that it is 100% easier to discern the hand of God after it has passed, than in its passing. Oftentimes what looks like a tragedy becomes a moment when God begins anew. Our God is a redeeming God. That redemption doesn't just mean redeeming our souls. It also means redeeming hearts, and minds, and dreams.

This morning we have heard the story of a man who is powerfully deceived. Jacob is tricked into marrying a woman he did not want to marry. He is also deceived, and cheated out of marrying the love of his heart, Rachel.

Imagine the heartbreak, the anger, the disappointment when Jacob woke in the morning after his wedding, and found he was not married to Rachel after all, but her sister!

We are not told much about Jacob's reaction. Interestingly the aftermath of this deception is rather anticlimatic. We are simply told of a five sentence conversation between Jacob and his new, deceiving father-in-law.

There is no record of emotion. We are not even told that Jacob confronted Laban. The Hebrew word that tells us Jacob spoke with Laban is used over 3900 times in the Old Testament. More than 94% of the time it is translated basically as *said*.

Now, I suppose pretty much everyone one of us, if we found ourselves deceived so bitterly as Jacob was, would do more than simply say a few words. The verbs that would be used for my reactions would be something like, "Tom raged," or "Tom screamed his fool head off...".

I strongly suspect there is some very distinct editing going on in this story. I believe Jacob did more than speak to Laban. He would have been stunned, and sorely disappointed.

But the story continues to unfold past these verses, past these chapters; even past the book of Genesis.

Jacob ends up marrying Rachel, the love of his true heart. Leah, his bride of deception, though, also remains his wife, and bears him children. She becomes the mother of Judah.

Judah becomes the ancestor of David. David becomes not just the legendary king of Israel, David also becomes the ancestor of Jesus. It is 100% easier to discern the hand of God after it has passed, than in its passing.

Jacob woke up that morning to dark news, and a broken heart. Yet God's hand was not stilled. Circumstances, and a devious father-in-law may have conspired against him.

But, as Paul would say centuries later,

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

Yes, there are times when it seems all signs point to disaster, or calamity. But, as John Lennon said, of all people, "Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."