



**Scriptures:** Gen 33:1a, Gen 33:1-4, Gen 33:8-9 (NIV)

**Message Summary:** We're kicking off the new year with a short string on Picking up and Letting Go. This week, we're reflecting on letting go in order to make room for things we need to pick up in the new year.

- **Intimidating Reunions** - when Jacob becomes rich and returns home, about 20 years later, he hears that his brother Esau is

- **Unexpected Responses** However, Esau runs to meet Jacob when he sees him in the distance and embraces him and weeps with him. He refuses the gifts. The prodigal son story in Lk 15 has Jacob and Esau in mind, it uses a similar language. Jacob is the prodigal in this story.

- **Abandoning Old Stories** Jacob is the protagonist in the story, but he's not a hero. Esau is the one who surprises us. The story is about Jacob being more than his mistakes and Esau being more than his hurts. When we hold on to the old narratives, it gets very hard for us to pick up something new.

**Connect:** Share one highlight from your holiday break.

**Share:** Jeremy said that opinions have a way of becoming fossilized.

*"And that's the real danger as we enter into a new year imagining all of the possibilities for change and growth, because you see, when opinions get stuck, they have a way of becoming narratives."*

*An opinion is no longer a statement about how we view the world, but now a story that tells us how we must view the world. And this is why the practice of continually letting go is far more difficult, and to be honest, far more important than we often realize. Letting go of old stories is often the prerequisite for the change we hope to see in ourselves."*

Share what you think about this connection between opinions and narratives. How has this been true for you? What are some of your past narratives that were formed by fossilized opinions (or maybe even family of origin history, like in Jacob-Esau story)?

**Reflect:** What do you think about Jacob's strategy when he faces a reunion with his brother? In what way does it make sense and in what way it doesn't? What does it tell us about the way Jacob sees Esau?

**Engage:** What surprises you in the story of reconciliation of the two brothers who meet decades later in life? What do you think about this connection between Jacob-Esau story and the Prodigal Son story?

*"As much as this story is about how Jacob is more than his mistakes, it is also, equally, about how Esau is so much more than his hurts."*

What story do you think each of the brothers needs to let go of?

**Take away:** What would you like to take away from today's conversation?

And a reflection question for this week: what is one old story from your past that still tells you what is and is not possible today? How can you let go of it to make room for new possibilities?

**Pray:**

*God of new beginnings,  
who is always ahead of us,  
inviting us forward,  
encouraging us to begin and begin again  
would you be present in the start of this new year,  
as we imagine ourselves in new moments and situations,  
as we learn to love the best about what you have created in us,  
as we survey a new year laid out before us,  
full of possibilities and dangers and triumphs and failures.  
Might we become captured by what you see in us:  
goodness, and kindness, and strength, and resolve.  
Fill our lungs with the fresh breathe of spirit,  
allows us to see with new eyes the possibilities ahead,  
bring us forward in joy as real as grace  
to celebrate your holy presence in and around us,  
in the strong name of the risen Christ we pray.  
Amen.*