From Longing to Praise: The Story of Leah

A reflection on Genesis 29:31-35

Rev Isaac Lawrence · June 2026

BIBLE READING Genesis 29:31-35

It feels strange not to be in church on Sunday, but as this is my day off, I wanted to share a reflection from something I have been reading this week: the story of Leah in Genesis 29:31-35.

I was struck again by how deep her longing was to be loved by Jacob. Leah was living with pain, rejection, and the ache of not being loved in the way she longed for. When her first son was born, she named him Reuben, saying, “The Lord has looked upon my affliction. For now my husband will love me.” Then came Simeon, because the Lord had heard that she was unloved. Then Levi, and again her hope was clear: “Now this time my husband will be joined to me.” Her words reveal a heart craving love, attention, and acceptance.

And if we are honest, how often are we like that? We look for people, circumstances, or blessings to fill the ache within us. We tell ourselves that perhaps now, perhaps this time, things will be different. So often our focus can become fixed on our own needs, our own desires, and our own longing to be seen.

But then something changed for Leah. When her fourth son was born, she named him Judah and said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” That is such a powerful turning point. Her eyes were no longer only on her pain or on what she hoped another person would give her. Her focus shifted to God, and praise rose from a wounded heart.

What is remarkable is that from the line of Judah came David, Israel’s greatest king, and from that same line came Jesus Christ. When Leah’s heart turned from longing for human love to praising God, her story became part of something far greater than she could ever have imagined.

There is a lesson here for all of us. When we live only from the place of our hurts, our unmet needs, and our personal desires, we can stay trapped in disappointment. But when we turn our hearts toward praise, thanksgiving, and gratitude to God, something changes. Praise lifts us. Gratitude steadies us. Thanksgiving reminds us that God is still writing a bigger story.

Sometimes God does His deepest work not when we get what we want, but when our hearts are turned away from ourselves and back towards Him.