

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 10th March 2024 10 am

Encountering God - Jacob wrestles with God

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture.....

Hymn MP 1000 King of Kings

Scripture Psalm 40 (page 566)

Prayer

Children's talk Mother's day, Mary see KNBC Childrens talks.doc

Chorus MP 634 Thank you Jesus for your love to me

Notices Container, Nebu and Leena, Lee Sok, Easter, New Coffee rota,
Judy Cook, Writing to Prime minister/MP's in the 5 years?

Prayer and Lord's prayer

Readings Luke 11:1-13 (page 1042)

Genesis 32:22-32 (page 36) Hosea 11:12 – 12:6 (page 908)

Hymn MP 349 It passeth knowledge that dear love of thine

Sermon

Hymn MP 759 When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound

Closing Prayer [Sermon Index Database](#)

MP 418 King of Kings for Palm Sunday

MP 747 what a might God we serve

486 Now thank we all our God

Prayer and Exordium

Everyone, soon if not later, will wrestle with God.

- Imagine a soldier the night before the big battle. After years of preparation the moment has now come. Everywhere are troops and equipment. This soldier finds a quiet corner and as he lays down he looks up, maybe at the stars, he considers what tomorrow will bring. The day of the great battle has arrived. There is every chance he will die, this is likely the last day, or night, of his life. He is on his own with his thoughts, - and in a prayer struggle with God.
- Or maybe here's an elderly man or woman. She is near the end of her life and feels in herself that her time has come. Or maybe she has a terminal illness – as we all have – and wonders if tonight will be her last, she will face her final battle with death, tomorrow may not come. She wrestles as she sits on the brink of eternity.

So it is with Jacob. Jacob is alone, in the dark, lying down he ponders on what tomorrow will bring. It is to be a long night. The enemy Esau is before him with four hundred men x2, and in that calculation he will die. This is the day he faces eternity – and like all of us – he is facing it alone.

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. - So Jacob was left alone, x2

How often is that the case in life, particularly at the end of it. All has gone, we are alone and if we have the Lord, if we belong to him, alone with Him.

During the twenty years of Jacob's life with Laban he had acquired wives, children and many possessions. It had felt like a lifetime. (Gen 31:41)

As Jacob had set off those many years before, the Lord had met with him, and through the ladder of ascending and descending angels assured him that He was with him - and divine help was with him. (the 4th Feb sermon)

Yet far from home life with Laban had been difficult, as life away from our eternal home in this world is one of difficulty. Laban was a hard task master, but the Lord had been there with him through the thick and the thin.

If you are a Christian remember the Lord is with you in your troubles as you struggle on and persevere through the darkness of life in this world.

In all of this the Lord had prospered Jacob, as the OT sign of possessions signified. He had wives, children and large flocks. What he had gathered as life's accoutrements was now gone. However much we attain - we end where we started.

As Job said "**Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart.** 1:21

He had set out those years before, a young man, and young in the faith. His prayer then was a worldly prayer. It was for Jacob, a man devious in nature, a long slow maturing – as it has been for me - but mature he did, he grew in age, but he also grew in grace. And the prayer he prayed as he laid down on that last night is the prayer of a man who has walked with his God.

How different from the one before, there it is in Gen 32:9 **Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau,** v9-11

What a humble contrite prayer – how our prayers reveal our faith!

Yes he was going home, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' It sounds like he is heading to his eternal home. Does that remind you of Jesus's words 'Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master's happiness!' Mt 25:21,23

Jacob, as with every one of the Lord's people, had those ascending and descending angels watch over him all those years – our years, and now his life behind him, he is on this last journey home, to his eternal home.

Look back at 32:1 **Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.**

2 When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim. Why? **Mahanaim** means 'two camps or two armies'. Who is he referring to? the angels and his company? Or Esau's force ahead? He describes them as the camp of God. Angels have brought him thus far - is this the hand over point? to those who are to take him onwards to ensure his safe arrival? Just as the angels grasped Lot by the hand and lead him to safety, or as the poor man Lazarus in Luke 16 was carried to his eternal home by angels. This is what the Lord's people can expect and rest in.

■ Billy graham said as he neared death that he was expecting angels to escort him safely into the presence of the Lord. Yes.

⇒ Everyone who trust in the Lord will, like Jacob, be taken through the troubles of this life - and safely brought to our heavenly home.

v24 **So Jacob was left alone**, as we all are at the end of life's journey. The great enemy is ahead and it is to be a long night, alone with his thoughts,

2a

and alone with God. He reflects on the Lord's grace and favour to him **I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.**v10

But now with Esau ahead with all those armed men, there's urgent prayer about the battle to come in the morning. **Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau. Save me,** x2 That there is THE last urgent prayer for many. Jacob is now at the Jabbok river. It will be a place of wrestling, for the Hebrew word 'wrestle' is a pun on Jabbok.

This is a passage about wrestling, and prayer is wrestling with God, and impending disaster throws us onto the Lord - to wrestle with Him. Do you? While Jacob was earnest in prayer *stirring himself up to take hold on God*, a man takes hold of him.

a man wrestled with him till daybreak. Does not God invite you to do it?, He starts this single combat, one on one, hand to hand. Who is this? x2

A man - is this an angel or is this the angel, the Lord of the angels, the Lord of hosts who often appeared in human form. As with Joshua about to fight outside Jericho who looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Josh 5:13. This was the commander of the Lord's army as Joshua was an anti-type or pre-cursor.

So here is God manifested in the flesh, one of the many appearances of God in human form, the incarnation of God, the pre-incarnate Jesus before he assumed the human nature for perpetuity. Jesus has now our human nature which he has taken to heaven, the firstfruits. There's a man in heaven and we his redeemed people from the earth are guaranteed to one day follow Him there. This angelic man is the Lord God Almighty in human form.

In the desert the Lord who is with his people, said: **See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him.**" Ex 23:20-21

In Hosea 12 we read of Jacob: **In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him;** v3.4

⇒ **God wrestled with him - that Jacob might prevail against God.**

Now that all sounds rather confusing. Let me explain....

In the Near East law cases were sometimes settled by an ordeal or test. One mode of this was combat by wrestling. That is how duels were fought.

2b

Armies stood by as their champion fought it out and gained the victory for all (as with David and Goliath and also later with Abner and Joab the generals of two armies did in 2 Sam 2:14)

Jacob faced overwhelming odds against him in Esau's 400 strong army. So we all, everyone one of us will on our last day face the overwhelming weight of our guilt. In this defeat and eternal death are surely inevitable.

But remember Jacob will not let God go until he receives the blessing. It is this blessing he must have, the removal of the curse.

Hosea goes on to say of Jacob **he wept and begged for his favour**. He sought **favour, or grace** from God. v3b.4

This encounter reveals the essential struggle by fallen men for justification before God, the removal of the curse for His blessing and favour.

⇒ Yet while Jacob sought the Lord's blessing and favour, - it was one of his descendants who bought it for him - and all of us who are in Him.

25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

The thigh or hip was regarded as the seat of reproductive powers. So the man as he 'touched' or 'smote' Jacob's thigh was a sign of the smiting of that descendant of Jacob who should be smitten of God.

This grace or favour or justification before God was achieved through the obedience of the Suffering Servant. **Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.** Is. 53:4. Surely he was stricken for me. By His sufferings and overcoming is justification for Jacob and all of God's elect. (Is. 53:11).

Look at Christ's struggle with God in the garden of Gethsemane. With sweat like drops of blood, blood that was soon to be spilled on the cross.

For as Jacob's wrestling is over and while he is speaking to the Lord 33:1 **Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men;** There's that enemy ahead, for Jacob a brother in the flesh, the carnal one. For us there is the accuser of our souls.

So too at Gethsemane, Jesus' place of battle, that night of wrestling with God, The night he prevailed, having wrestled in prayer with God and the battle won, we read **While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.**" Mt 26:47

So as Jacob **prevailed** - Jesus prevailed. He struggled and suffered and wrestled with God on the cross — It was not to be gained without a wound. He is our great representative, the perfect for the imperfect, the good for the bad through his victory he has won for us all the favour or grace of God.

It is finished he called out. He had earned the favour of God – God struck His Only Son – that He may not strike me. **There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Hallelujah!**

The Lord Jesus, the seed of Jacob was able to overpower, or nullify the wrath of God for me and you if you are in Christ today. The Lord Jesus is our great champion, your champion, my champion.

May all the praise and Glory be His! As we stand back and see his victory on our behalf. May the praises of the Lord's people go up like the cheer of the army as it sees the victory won for it!

Now the Lord God in love beckons the lost to find forgiveness of sins through faith in his Son. May there be no-one here this morning who has not done that. If you haven't - then do so now. Do it now, don't leave it.

Christ's persistence is seen in Jacob persevering, He emerges from the ordeal with the blessing. **Jacob is now called Israel = he struggles with God.**

Yes, the road to Glory is through His suffering. Just as Job suffered before his glorious ending so we as the Lord's people must expect like Jacob to wrestle, weep and cry out. We like him in our spiritual wrestling hear the words of Paul who said **"we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,"** Ac 14:22. We all are like Paul to **strengthen** each other as **disciples and encourage** us all to **remain true to the faith.**

Let us not to give up, but wrestle on to the finale victory, - those who persevere to the end like Jesus receive the crown of life to come.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. So let us not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Hebrews 12:2-4

⇒ **Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long.**

It is to God that you and I have to do

If you do have faith in Christ then the Lord refines that faith, tests our faith. It is clear from Scripture that the trials and trouble in this life are to that end. It is the Lord's doing. All the servants of God in this world are wrestlers because the Lord exercises us with various kinds of troubles.

It is not said that Satan, or any mortal man, wrestled with Jacob, but God himself: to teach us that our faith is tried by him; it is he who descends into the arena to try our strength. Scripture speaks much of it, and experience and reason teach us it to be true.

Job in his great troubles never blamed the devil or others but always said the Lord's hand was heavy upon him. and whenever we are tempted, our business is with him.

⇒ Let us wrestle with God so much that he says **let me go!!**

This is our lot in this dark world, do not keep avoiding the Lord's dealings with you that is to stay as a child, Let us grow up in our **most Holy faith**. We are growing towards our heavenly home. One day that sun will break through these dark clouds, soon that new eternal day will dawn.

The night is nearly over - the day is almost here

24b The **man wrestled with Jacob until daybreak** again in

v26 **Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."** In other words

The angel's desire to depart before daylight expressed God's concern lest Jacob perish through seeing His face unobscured by the darkness, for no-one can see the face of God and live (cf. 16:13; Ex. 33:20; Jdg. 6:22f.; 13:22).

It is night but the night is nearly over and a bright new day is coming. Up to that point, indeed all through the night Jacob saw the Lord as if in a shadowy form in the darkness. As twilight gradually came the form became clearer until suddenly the new day broke and God is fully seen.

So we in this world see only in part, as we continue in the Christian life so we see gradually more clearly until that day comes when we see and know even as we are seen and fully known.

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face."
1Co 13:12

■ Mirrors in those days were made of polished brass or copper and gave a hazing image.

v30 **So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."** Jacob gives a new name to the place; he calls it *Peniel, the face of God*. Jacob did as it were end up standing in the door of heaven because it was there he had obtained the favour of God, and seen the appearance of God.

We see this passage as primarily about wrestling but Jacob did not say "In this place I wrestled with God, and prevailed"; but, "In this place I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved! It was God's mercy that I have been snatched from death. I have escaped with my life!"

Jacob would not let go until he had the blessing of God.

Peroration – take hold of God

This passage teaches us always to expect the blessing of God, although it will be found through wrestling, the Lord commended Jacob's perseverance. Jacob having endured a long and severe conflict, stands his ground.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Paul says to us all **Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.** 1Ti 6:12 **take hold of the life that is truly life.** 1Ti 6:19

■ Rugby -The great push to get over the line!. Tries are dived at!

So too the Lord seeks you to be strengthened as we *take hold* of him. Take hold of Him. Let us all take hold of God as we face eternity.

take hold of the hope offered to us. Heb 6:18

At the end of the day, it is not the trials that remain but the wonder of our salvation, - that we can see God and live.

There with Jacob the time of full revelation was not yet completed, they walked in the twilight of morning; and the Lord showed himself to them, by degrees, until, at length 31 **the sun rose above him as he passed Peniel.**

For us Christ the **Sun of Righteousness** has risen, in whom perfect brightness shines forth.

Jacob was filled with awe as he saw but a glimpse of God. For us Christ is the eternal living image of God set before our eyes in the mirror of the gospel! Let us therefore gaze upon Him that **his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**
2Co 4:6

Let us all, you and I now **press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** Php 3:12