

Wrestling with God

October 16, 2016 – Genesis 32:22-30

“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, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 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. Then the man said, ‘Let ME go, for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, I will not let you go unless YOU bless me.’ The Man asked him, What is your name? Jacob he answered. Then the Man said, ‘ Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome. Jacob said, ‘Please tell me Your Name,’ But HE replied, Why do you ask My Name? Then He blessed him there.’ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared. The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob’s hip was touched near the tendon.”

I wrestled – 4 years of High School and 4 years of college. In high school the matches were 3 – 2 minute periods. In College 2- 2 minute periods and the third period was 3 minutes. If the match went to the end, both opponents were nearly crawling off the mat.

Today we hear that Jacob wrestled with a man from night until day break.

As we look further in this text, we learn that “The Man” is The Lord God. Jacob is the son of Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob had a twin brother named Esau whom Jacob tricked into selling the birthright for a bowl of soup. Esau was “Daddy’s Boy” while Jacob was a “Momma’s Boy” (Gen. 25:24-34) Because Esau wanted to kill his brother, Jacob ran away and went and lived and worked for his Uncle Laban.

Jacob worked for his uncle Laban for 7 years to marry the Younger daughter named Rachel. Unfortunately for Jacob, his Uncle Laban tricked him, and after the consummation of the marriage was over, the next morning Jacob found that he had consummated the marriage with Leah – the elder sister - instead of Rachel.

Laban made the excuse that according to custom, the elder daughter needed to be married before the younger. Since Jacob loved Rachel, he agreed to work for Laban another 7 years, this time to get the younger daughter Rachel.

Jacob then worked for his uncle Laban another 6 years to simply make some money Thus Jacob worked for his uncle Laban a total of 20 years (Gen. 31:38).

At the end of those 20 years Jacob finally had enough and was now going to return to his home land because Laban had changed the wages multiple times and Jacob wanted to see his Father Isaac.

There was however a problem with Jacob going home to see his father. There was still his angry brother Esau. Would Esau still want to kill Jacob?

As Jacob traveled back home, Jacob learned that Esau was coming with 400 men. So Jacob was caught between an Uncle who cheated him, and His Brother Esau, who might still be angry. So Jacob divided up his possessions and his two wives (Leah & Rachel) and their maid servants – Bilhah & Zilpah and the children. Jacob also sent a number of large gifts to Esau, which numbered 580 animals of Goats – Sheep – Camels – Cows and donkeys.

So that sets the stage for his wrestling match. Jacob has sent the family and his possessions ahead, and Jacob is alone on the one side of the Jabbok stream / river. It is then that a man comes and wrestles with Jacob.

Jacob’s spiritual and emotional wrestling match with God in prayer, actually becomes a physical wrestling match, as The Lord came to Jacob in the form of a man.

Perhaps none of you have actually done any physical wrestling, but perhaps you have wrestled with God in prayer, maybe even through the NIGHT? You cannot sleep, you cannot sit still, you cannot concentrate on anything except the matter at hand. As you worship God and talk to God from the heart, you plead with God for help in whatever situation there may be in your life at the time.

Some of the things that we sometimes wrestle with in prayer may include shortage of funds to pay the bills, a broken down car, failing health, loved ones who are ill or perhaps you had an argument with a family member or fellow member of the congregation, and you do not see any resolution in sight. And so you take it to the Lord in prayer.

In this incident with Jacob we see an amazing thing – Jacob wins!

Vs. 24 – So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.

Vs. 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.

Vs. 26 – Then the man said, ‘Let ME go, for it is daybreak.’ But Jacob replied, I will not let you go unless YOU bless me.’

Jacob held on to God in faith and in this case, physically as well.

God did bless Jacob.

Vs. 27 – The Man asked him, What is your name? - Jacob, he answered.

Vs. 28 – Then the Man said, ‘ Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.

Vs. 29 – Jacob said, ‘Please tell me Your Name,’ But HE replied, Why do you ask My Name? Then He blessed him there.’

It is from the family line of Jacob that the promised Savior – Jesus, would come. It is because of Jesus that we have eternal life in Heaven.

Jesus, Who is True God, came to earth and became flesh and blood as He was born of the Virgin Mary.

It is because of Jesus’ innocent suffering and death on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead, that we are forgiven, and that we have heaven.

It is because of Jesus, that we can approach God, anytime and anyplace in prayer, and we know that for Jesus’ sake, that God hears our prayers and answers them.

In actuality, because of our sin, we deserve nothing Good from God, yet He has saved us from hell and God listens to and answers our prayers. Sometimes NO, Sometimes WAIT, and amazingly Sometimes – YES!

Before God physically departed from Jacob, The Lord God touched the hip of Jacob and put it out of joint, and Jacob then walked with a limp. God was in His grace reminding Jacob Who it is that is God.

To keep Jacob from becoming proud and to be a reminded to Jacob that it is God Who is ALL powerful and in control, God touched the hip of Jacob, and so Jacob had a limp.

God allows various ailments and troubles into our lives to keep us humble and remind us of our need for God in all things.

What a blessing that we can go to God everyday in prayer, and be confident that He hears us and answers us because of Jesus our Risen and Living Savior and God. AMEN