

Order of Worship for October 16, 2022

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*” – Hymn #686

Confession and Forgiveness p. 203

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm

P: I lift up my eyes to the hills.

C: From where does my help come?

P: My help comes from the LORD,

C: who made heaven and earth.

P: He will not let your foot be moved;

C: He who keeps you will not slumber.

P: Behold, He who keeps Israel

C: will neither slumber nor sleep.

P: The LORD is your keeper;

C: the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

P: The sun shall not strike you by day,

C: nor the moon by night.

P: The LORD will keep you from all evil;

C: He will keep your life.

P: The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in

C: from this time forth and forevermore.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: I lift up my eyes to the hills.

C: From where does my help come?

P: My help comes from the LORD,

C: who made heaven and earth.

Kyrie (*Lord, Have Mercy*) p. 204

Hymn of Praise (*Gloria to God in the Highest*) p. 204

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. O Lord, almighty and everlasting God, You have commanded us to pray and have promised to hear us. Mercifully grant that Your Holy Spirit may direct and govern our hearts in all things that we may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of Your name;

through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Old Testament Reading – Genesis 32:22-30

R: The same night [Jacob] arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that He did not prevail against Jacob, He touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with Him. Then He said, "Let Me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." And He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked Him, "Please tell me Your name." But He said, "Why is it that you ask My name?" And there He blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

R: But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse p. 205

Holy Gospel – Luke 18:1-8

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 18th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I

neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” And the Lord Jesus said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to You, O Christ.

Nicene Creed p. 206 (or inside back cover of hymnal)

Sermon Hymn: “*Word of God, Come Down in Earth*” - **Hymn #545**

Sermon: *Fighting with God* - **Genesis 32:22-30**

The Bible is full of what could charitably be described as characters. Saints and scoundrels who never act in a way that we’d expect. Yet these stories remind us that God is working through actual, flawed people to do his work, and if God can use people as flawed as these, he can even use you and me.

Of all of the characters in the Bible, though, none seem to go through quite as many misadventures as the main character in today’s Old Testament lesson, Jacob. It starts before he was born, when he and his twin brother Esau fought in their mother Rebekah’s womb. The conflict continued throughout their life, as their differing personalities came out. Esau was a large, hairy, manly man who was known as a great hunter. Jacob was not, instead he was a man of the tents, his mother’s favorite. Jacob’s name means heel, because he was grabbing Esau’s heel at birth. That name also meant someone who tripped others up, who cheated to win.

Jacob lived up to that name. As author Frederick Buechner describes Jacob...

Twice he cheated his lame-brained brother, Esau, out of what was coming to him. At least once he took advantage of the blindness of his old father, Isaac, and played him for a sucker. He outdid his double-crossing father-in-law, Laban, by conning him out of most of his livestock and, later on, when Laban was looking the other way, by sneaking off with not only both the man's daughters, but just about everything else that wasn't nailed down including his household gods. Jacob was never satisfied. He wanted the moon, and if he'd ever managed to bilk heaven out of that, he would have been back the next morning for the stars to go with it.

As our lesson begins today, though, Jacob’s past had finally caught up with him. Despite all of the wealth he’d gained, despite his wives and children, he was still afraid of the brother he’d spend his whole life fighting with. He was still afraid that the brother he’d cheated out of his birthright and blessing twice wanted to kill him. And so he sent everyone ahead, and waited alone on the other side of the river.

Not suspecting anything was about to happen, Jacob was jumped by an assailant. A long wrestling match followed, a wrestling that lasted through the night, and through it Jacob came to realize he was wrestling with God.

Jacob's name means "heel," which is ironic when we think of him wrestling. In professional wrestling, a heel is the one who is a villain, a rule breaker. The heel's role is to get the crowd riled up, booing them and jeering them. The heel will cheat to win, using any dirty trick they can think of.

Jacob wrestling with God is the culmination of all of the struggles he's had. He struggled with his older brother. He struggled with his parents. He struggled with his father in law. And now he struggled with God. Jacob and God wrestle all night. Jacob's hip even gets dislocated. Yet he persists. Yet he keeps wrestling. Yet he refuses to give up. And because he does so, he wins.

God wrestles with Jacob, and God loses. How could that happen? Because God cheats. Jacob thought he was the best cheater out there. He had nothing on God. God could win at any time. God even pops Jacob's hip out of joint. Yet God loses. Because in losing, God knows He wins. Jacob, the cheater, gets cheated. Even though God is defeated, God gives a blessing. And in that blessing Jacob is given a new name, a new understanding of who he is.

We see God win by losing the same way on the cross. It seemed to everyone as if Jesus had lost. He suffered and died, and that was the end of it. In the strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended, it seemed like death won. Yet it was in losing that Jesus won. It was in dying that Jesus defeated death.

We, too, wrestle with God. Like Jacob, we don't get to pick the times and places where we do so. We don't pick the times when we cry out, "Lord, what's going on here? Why are You letting this happen?" We don't get to pick when troubles come into our lives, and when we start struggling with God. Yet we also know that God is big enough to handle our questions and challenges, to take on what we think we can dish out.

Martin Luther described that wrestling with God as *tentatio*. "Anfechtung. This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is..." It's the trials that drive us back to God.

Troubles come, even though we don't like them. But see why troubles are so beneficial to the Christian. It has nothing to do with earning points with God. It has nothing to do with toughening you up mentally or physically or psychologically or spiritually. It has everything to do with driving you back to God and the Word of God.

Jacob was blessed through that long night of wrestling and when dawn finally came he had received a new name, Israel, because he had fought with God. Wrestling with God got Jacob a new name. Instead of being a heel, a cheater, he became one who had fought with God, and won. That name wouldn't just stay his name, though. It would go on to name his descendants, who would continue to fight with God. When they did, though, God would continue to be with them and fight to bring them back to the way they should go.

There's a variation of the famous Footprints in the Sand poem. In the original, the footprints show Jesus walking with the poet, and when there is only one set of footprints, that's when Jesus carries them. In the alternate ending God points off in the distance and says, "Now, THAT long groove is where I DRAGGED you, kicking and screaming."

Fighting with God doesn't leave us unscarred. Jacob walked with a limp the rest of his days. Wrestling with God gave Jacob a limp. That limp reminded Jacob that he was special.

Although it's never easy, when we see the troubles and trials of life as occasions to grow in the ways of God, we are blessed at dawn by a new understanding of what it means to carry the name of Jesus ourselves.

Jesus wrestled with death and the devil, with heaven and hell—and he won. He won for you. He didn't lie, cheat, or steal, except for cheating the devil out of what he thought was his. Jesus forgives us for all the times we do lie and cheat and steal. And he gives us what we never thought to ask for, but wanted to give us all along: he blesses us.

Troubles come. And when they come, they show us our own inadequacies. They point us to God. They point us to His Word, and the promises found there. And the God who meets us there, the God who wrestled with Jacob and was with him all the time he was on the run, gives us his presence. What a great promise.

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord in Your mercy...

C: hear our prayer.

Stewardship Message:

Sharing Our Ministry:

Offering and Voluntary:

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p. 208

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, everlasting Father, for You have sent Your Son, Christ Jesus. Into this world to become one of us and to “wrestle” with us so that we persist in our relationship with us. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving

P: Blessed are You, O Lord God, King of the whole universe, for You invite us to come to You again and again in prayer. We give thanks to You for answering our prayers in Your Son, Christ Jesus, who come to us in the Sacrament with His true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Send Your Holy Spirit so that we receive this in true faith and continue to come to You each and every day. Hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer p. 209

The Words of Our Lord, Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*) p. 210

Distribution of Holy Communion

“*On Eagles’ Wings*” – **Hymn #727**

“*I Come, O Savior, To Thy Table*” – **Hymn #618**

Nunc Dimittis (*Now Let Us Depart*) p. 211

Prayer after Communion:

P: P: Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ You have revealed Your glory among the nations. Preserve the works of Your mercy, that Your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confidence of Your name, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benedicamus and Blessing: p. 212

Closing Hymn: “*Come, My Soul, with Ev’ry Care*” - **Hymn #779**

Postlude