



“Jacob wrestles with God”

Sunday 2nd August 2020 18th in Ordinary

Rev. Tony & Cathy Morling.

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Welcome: The Lighting of a Candle & Call to Worship

Calm me, Lord,
as you calmed the storm;
still me, Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease;
enfold me, Lord in your peace.

David Adam (1936-2020)

StF 364

O for a thousand tongues

- 1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and king,
the triumphs of his grace!
- 2 My gracious master and my God,
assist me to proclaim, - to spread
through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.
- 3 Jesus - the name that charms our
fears,- that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.
- 4 He breaks the power of cancelled
sin, - he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest
clean, - his blood availed for me.

- 5 He speaks; and, listening to his
voice,- new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts
rejoice;- the humble poor believe.
- 6 See all your sins on Jesus laid:
the lamb of God was slain;
his soul was once an offering made
that all may heaven gain.
- 7 In Christ, our head, you then shall
know- shall feel, your sins forgiven,
anticipate your heaven below,
and own that love is heaven.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer:

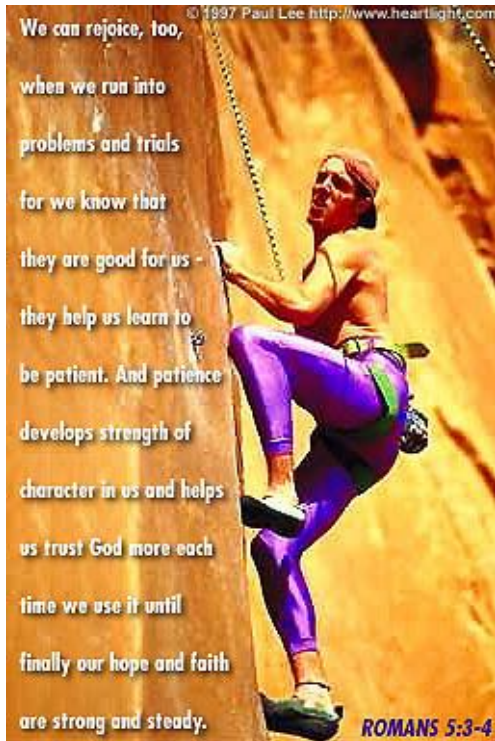
God of our going out
and our coming home,
I worship you today.
For the times and places
that have filled me with joy,
I praise you.
Where I have chosen the wrong path
and caused pain to myself,
to you and to others,
I ask your forgiveness.
For the assurance that you will walk
beside me to forgive me and
restore me,
I thank you.

Amen

Today's Reading
from the New Testament
Roman 5:3-5

Not only so,
but we also glory in our sufferings,
because we know that suffering
produces perseverance;
4perseverance, character; and
character, hope.

And hope does not put us to shame,
because God's love has been poured
out into our hearts through the Holy
Spirit, who has been given to us.



<https://www.heartlight.org/>

from the Old Testament:
Genesis 32:22-31

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the 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 is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, 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 place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.'

The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Time to Reflect:

'I will not let you go unless you bless me'

Jacob & Esau are two boys who have been at each other since Rebekah delivered them into the world. Esau was born first and Jacob gripping the heel of his older brother.

Jacob is all alone- with his thoughts, memories and conscience. It's the night before he meets Esau. He's afraid, he's distressed, he doesn't know if the goods he sent ahead were enough to appease his twin brother's fury. At this point there's nothing he can do to get out of it.

Into this turmoil an enigmatic man appears to wrestle with Jacob all night long.

Anyone over the age of 40 may recall commentator Ken Walton introduced gargantuan wrestlers like Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks. But this wrestling has no three minute intervals with water and a towel in the corner. This is unrelenting and exhausting. Neither will give up.



JACOB & ESAU: SIBLING RIVALRY
<https://groundwork.reframemedia.com/>

Jacob is a devious guy -- a thief, a trickster. His name can be translated as "one who cheats". He gets Esau to sell him his birth right for a bowl of stew and connives with his mother to receive Isaac's blessing. Esau is so furious that he starts plotting to kill Jacob. Jacob finds out and flees to Uncle Laban. Many years pass, he becomes so prosperous that Laban and his sons become suspicious of his intentions, so Jacob, at 90 years old, takes his family and his flocks and his servants and journeys back home.

On the way he has to pass through Esau's land. Jacob sends messengers with peace offerings but hears that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men. It looks like Esau's anger has not abated and this is where our reading picks up - with Jacob sending his wives and children to safety while he remains behind to await his fate.



Jacob wrestling by Marc Chagall
<https://interruptingthesilence.co>

Eventually, this man/angel can't get the better of Jacob, so he puts Jacob's hip out of joint. Jacob doesn't give up, and won't let go until he gets a blessing -- perhaps echoing back to the moment that started this chain of events when Jacob stole Esau's blessing. 'I will not let you go unless you bless me'.

We don't know what blessing it was that was spoken over Jacob. Jacob is given a new name - Israel - God-Wrestler - literally one who has striven with God and with humans and has prevailed. The angel departs and Jacob names the places Peniel - God Face - because he realizes how lucky he is to have seen God and survived to tell the tale. As with Abraham's three visitors, (in Genesis 18) hindsight suggests that the divine has been closer than he thought.

Jacob will beget a nation called Israel - a people who time and time again also wrestled with God.

Psychologists love this passage, because like Lady Macbeth they connect this sleepless night with pressing concerns, memories and anxieties arousing the conscience.

The power of the story is that many of us know what it is to wrestle long into the night with issues, concerns, fears and even with God- it is part of the life of faith.

Many of us are wrestling with not knowing how long this Covid-19 is going to be with us. Church stewards may have their thoughts focused on how best to open up our churches safely. All of us should wrestle with the great issue of racial injustice.

Many of us know that God works on our hearts in ways that make us feel uncomfortable. And before you say that you are too old to wrestle, just remember that Jacob was 90!

Are you wrestling with something at the moment? Do you sense God pushing you to do something that you are resisting?



<https://jamesclarkepublishing.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/struggling-with-god>

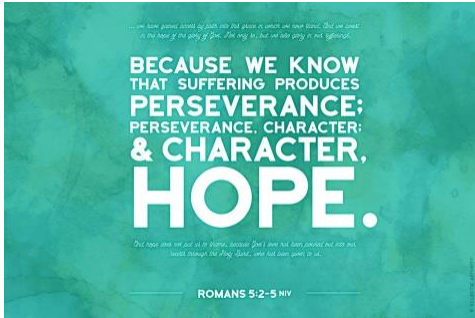
This passage suggests that we are not alone in these struggles - God isn't somehow distant to our questions, our uncertainties, our challenges - but is right there in the middle of it. Not always giving the answers: enigmatic yet real; transcendent yet tangible; holy yet incarnate.

In the end it looks like the defiant trickster has learned something of humility, for the two brothers reconcile, with Jacob bowing seven times as he nears Esau, and with Esau running forward to embrace his brother.

Perhaps Jacob's blessing and ours is that God persists with us in our wrestling. God strives. God doesn't give up on us. We have a God who is willing to enter into the fray with us -

a God who even came to be among us and experience life as one of us. We have a God who in Jesus knows what it is to wrestle with a cup that he wishes would be taken away.

St Paul reflecting upon his own struggles wrote, "...we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."



<http://www.riversidecma.org/>

If you are in the middle of a wrestling match, I want to encourage you. Don't give up because God isn't giving up on you. There is blessing to be found - even if the pain can be great. You might like to say, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'

And if you've been in the ring with God a few times and lived to tell the tale, be compassionate to those who are still in the thick of it. Offer your support, your wisdom, your patience, your story to those who are limping a bit.

And may the words of Charles Wesley be true for us all:

*Come, O Thou Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold but cannot see;
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.*

StF 461 Come, O thou traveller unknown

- 1 Come, O thou traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with thee;
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.
- 2 I need not tell thee who I am,
My misery and sin declare;
Thyself hast called me by my name;
Look on thy hands,
and read it there:
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.
- 3 In vain thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold!
Art thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold:
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.
- 4 Wilt thou not yet to me reveal
Thy new, unutterable name?
Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell;
To know it now resolved I am:
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.
- 5 What though my shrinking flesh complain,
And murmur to contend so long?
I rise superior to my pain,
When I am weak, then I am strong;
And when my all of strength
shall fail,
I shall with the God-Man prevail.
- 6 Yield to me now; for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart,
in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer;
Speak, or thou never hence
shalt move,
And tell me if thy name is Love.

7 'Tis Love! 'Tis Love!
thou diedst for me!
I hear thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks,
the shadows flee,
Pure, universal love thou art;
To me, to all, thy mercies move:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

8 My prayer has power with God;
the grace
Unspeaking I now receive;
Through faith I see thee face to
face,
I see thee face to face and live!
In vain I have not wept and strove:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

9 I know thee, Saviour, who thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's friend;
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end;
Thy mercies never shall remove:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

10 The sun of righteousness on me
Has risen with healing in his wings;
Withered my nature's strength,
from thee
My soul its life and succour brings;
My help is all laid up above:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

11 Contented now upon my thigh
I halt, till life's short journey end;
All helplessness, all weakness, I
On thee alone for strength depend;
Nor have I power from thee to
move:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

12 Lame as I am, I take the prey,
Hell, earth, and sin with ease
o'ercome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
And as a bounding hart fly home,
Through all eternity to prove
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

A time of prayer

Ever-present God,
I join my prayer with all those who
pray in the name of Jesus today:

We pray for your church that you
grant us patience as we continue to
the work we need to do to prepare for
future gatherings together.

We pray for Dawn, our new
Superintendent and Chair of the CI
District and his husband Nick, who
have just moved to Jersey and for
their family - Jenni, Ellie and Robyn

For those who are estranged from
loved ones and feel they are unable to
do anything to bring about
reconciliation.

For those who wrestle in the night
with trouble and distress of body,
mind and soul.

I pray especially for ...

Holy God,
help us to show others that you are
present in the midst of their struggles,
that together we might demonstrate
your great love and concern for your
world.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.

And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

SoF (6) 2887

My Lighthouse, my lighthouse

- 1 In my wrestling and in my doubts,
in my failures you won't walk out.
You great love will lead me
through, - you are the peace in my
troubled sea,- you are the peace in
my troubled sea.
- 2 In the silence you won't let go;
in the questions your truth will
hold. - You great love will lead
me through,
you are the peace in my troubled
sea, you are the peace in my
troubled sea.

*My lighthouse, my lighthouse
shining in the darkness,
I will follow you.*

*My lighthouse, my lighthouse
I will trust the promise,
you will carry me
safe to shore, safe to shore,
safe to shore, safe to shore.*

- 3 I won't fear what tomorrow brings,
with each morning I'll rise and sing.
My God's love will lead me through,
you are the peace in my troubled
sea, - you are the peace in my
troubled sea.
Refrain

Fire before us,
you're the brightest, you will
lead us through the storms.
Fire before us,
you're the brightest, you will
lead us through the storms.

Refrain

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A prayer of blessing

Power of God, be our protection;
wisdom of God, be our guide;
word of God, be our inspiration;
shield of God, be our defence;
hosts of God, be our deliverance;
Son of God be our salvation;
now and always. Amen
St Patrick's Breastplate, Book of
Armagh (9th Century)

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on the phone by dialing

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Meeting ID: 878 0011 0669 #

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