

Message #1029  
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"WRESTLING WITH GOD"  
{Genesis 32:22-32}

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#### INTRODUCTION

Nothing is more important in life than righting wronged relationships!

...seeking forgiveness from one whom you've wronged

...forgiving one who has wronged you

...sometimes this involves a struggle to accomplish

That is the very essence of the gospel message...God sending His Son to offer reconciliation to those who were estranged from Him.

...what God created was good

...but, humans perverted God's magnificent creation

...God rescued His people from bondage

...His people rebelled, complained, and turned their backs on Him!

...God sent the Law to guide His people

...they, in turn, broke very Law...plus more!

...God rescued His people from captivity

...they turned to their idolatry

...God sent prophets to guide...to lead...

...they murdered the prophets

Time and again God extended the olive branch!

Time and again God reached out and said, "I love you!"

And, time and again those whom He created rejected Him, rebelled, and went their own way!

So, in an effort to bring reconciliation, God sent His only Son in an effort to communicate His great love for those whom He created.

...His message was dismissed as heresy

...He was murdered on a cross by crucifixion.

Yet, God today still is making the effort to make right the relationship with those whom He created.

...there is no rest until one is made right with God {Psalm 42:1}

...there is no peace until one discovers the peace that only God can provide {John 14:27}

#### MAKING RIGHT A WRONGED RELATIONSHIP

Last Sunday I talked about righting wronged relationships...forgiving others...even those who may have mistreated/abused you!

On Monday I received an email from a friend who had received my sermon via email. This person wrote...

"So, I see this email entitled 'Forgiving Ernest Litweiler' and say...'Junk mail from Jack!' But it wasn't because I do have an Ernest...the man who fired me and harassed my wife! I'm not ready to forgive yet, but when God continues to nudge me with these kinds of reminders...it makes it difficult to hang on. I'm almost ready for a lunch...I'll let you know...!" Sometimes it's hard to let go, isn't it?

Forgiveness doesn't always come easy, does it?

Frequently it's a real struggle...and painful!

Our text this morning is about a man who schemed and cheated his brother out of his inheritance.

...he was a liar

...he was a cheat

...he lived by deception.

Even his Hebrew name, "Ya'gov" means: "one who takes what is not his" with the connotation of "trickster" or "cheater." Twenty years before Jacob had fraudulently gotten his older brother's inheritance and blessing by trickery! Now, twenty years later, he is about to return home...and face that brother whom he'd schemed and cheated...that brother, Esau, who threatened to kill Jacob because it cost him the blessing from his father, Isaac.

But, it was God who ordered Jacob to...

"Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you!"

{Genesis 31:3}

So Jacob packed up all he owned...his entire family...and began the journey home! ...one cannot help but be reminded of the prodigal's decision to go home after finally coming to his senses ...both were uncertain of the reception they would receive ...would the father receive the prodigal who had taken his inheritance and squandered it in a far off land?

...what reception would Jacob receive...and was his life in jeopardy?

God was true to His promise to be with Jacob and sent him an angelic escort {"...the angels of God met him..."}; nonetheless, one cannot help but sense the trepidation in his heart as he began the journey home.

The first step to receiving God's blessing and righting a wronged relationship is admitting you're wrong...repenting...turning around and changing the direction you're going!

Jacob then sent messengers ahead to meet with Esau to make a peace offering to begin the act of reconciliation. The key words of their message, however were... "I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes!" {Genesis 32:5}

But the messengers returned to Jacob with these words... "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him!" {32:6}

Hearing this, 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, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But You have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" {Genesis 32:9-12}

Jacob then sent his wives, children, and servants out of the camp {probably to hide them should Esau attack them}.

And Jacob was alone....!

...all was dark around him

...his mind was racing as he thought of the incident 20 years ago

...yet, had not God told him to return?

...and, could there be any reconciliation?

...would Esau murder him as he promised?

## SIX STEPS TO RECONCILIATION AND TO RECEIVING THE BLESSING OF GOD

1. There MUST be repentance!

- a. the need for healing in a relationship must be acknowledged
  - b. a change of direction is required, recognition that something must be done!
2. One must get alone with God--there is no substitute for spending time with God...each day!
- a. commit your way to Him
  - b. in all your ways acknowledge Him! Our text of the morning says, "Jacob was left alone!"
- a. Jesus demonstrated the importance of spending time alone with the Father.
  - b. there is no substitute for this
- ...how else can one know God's will?  
 ...where else can one turn?
- Can you think of any relationship that can survive without spending time alone...without communication?
- ...marriage?  
 ...children?  
 ...parents?  
 ...friendship?
3. One must be willing to struggle/wrestle with God.
- a. there are times when life situations seem dark...impossible!
  - b. we must be willing to come to the place where we acknowledge that the battle is the Lords--we can't do it! In the deep of the night a strange man attacked Jacob. It is a physical fight...no dream...and the two struggle as to death.
- ...hour after hour passes  
 ...neither can overpower the other  
 ...Jacob becomes aware this is no ordinary man.
- When is the last time you really struggled with God over some issue in your life... some relationship that need righted?
4. Don't let go...don't give up the fight!  
 "...the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak!'" But Jacob replied, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'"
- a. too often we give up too quickly
  - b. prayer has lost its intensity...fervency
  - c. requests are too general...not specific
  - d. we're in too big of a hurry and not willing to wait
  - e. it was Winston Churchill who said during W.W. II--"Never! Never! Never! give up!"
- ...good advice  
 ...don't let go...and never give up!
5. Ask God for His blessing. It was Jabez who prayed... "Oh, that you would bless me indeed....!"
- a. Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"
  - b. Jesus told us to "Ask and we would receive!"
- ...implies to ask...and keep asking  
 ...holding on to God and His promises
- c. James reminds us that we have not because we asked not!
- Before we can face the challenges of reconciliation we need the blessing of God upon us!
- God wants to bless you this morning!  
 Do you want God to bless you today?  
 Jacob could not face Esau without being assured of God's blessing!
6. Expect a miracle...a life-altering wonder from heaven!  
 "The man asked Jacob, '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!" Jacob emerged limping but a miracle happened!

...God gave him a new name

...no longer a cheater and liar

...not a quitter...but an overcomer!

God saw that Jacob was determined with his whole heart and all of his strength to hold on to Him; so, God threw Jacob's hip out of the socket.

...why, you ask?

...to make him totally dependent upon Him now!

...it is in our weakness that God provides the strength we need for every situation

...Jacob had to fully trust God

And, we read in 33:4...

"Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him...and they wept!"

## CONCLUSION

When trials and tests come your way...

1. Turn to God...commit every situation to Him.
2. Spend time alone with God
3. Wrestle the issue through with God
4. Don't give up
5. Ask and keep asking
6. Expect a miracle

Personal testimony--May, 1984--wrestling with God!

...witness of God's grace

...praise for God's mercy

...thanks for His blessing

What do you need to wrestle through with God today?

What blessing do you need today.

"We know that in ALL THINGS God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose!" {Romans 8:28}