**DARE TO WRESTLE WITH GOD**

**GENESIS 22:30**

*22 The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. 24 And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. 25 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. 26 Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” 27 And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” 28 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.” 29 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. 30 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.”*

***Prayer is the most undervalued resource in our lives and our families and our church.***

The Bible teaches us that...

**all the blessings** that God wants to bestow on us,

He does so through prayer.

Prayer is..

**the conduit** by which his power comes into your family;

it’s the **way you lay hold** of the promises and blessings of God.

**For the next several weeks – starting next week...**

We are going to be praying for revival

 In our own **lives**

 In our **church**

 In our **community**

**Today, we’re looking at a OT character who had a shaping encounter with God.**

Genesis 32 is the story of **Jacob wrestling all night** with a strange, heavenly man of some kind.

It’s supposed to be, among other things, a **picture of prayer.**

**Remember the story of Jacob...**

**Jacob had cheated** his older twin brother, Esau, out of his inheritance.

In those days**, the oldest son got “the birthright,”** which meant up to 2/3 of his father’s wealth,

And in the case of this family, it also meant he received the promises made to his grandfather Abraham that **their family would bear the Messiah.**

Well, one day when Jacob and Esau were teenagers Esau had **been out hunting**

He came in and he was really, really hungry

Jacob had just finished cooking a pot of stew, and Esau asked him for some.

Jacob told Esau we would trade a bowl of stew for His birthright.

Well, Esau, being a teenager and **thinking impulsively**, like they do, traded the bowl of stew for his birthright

 And to top it off, a few years later, Isaac is about to die

Jacob pretends to be Esau and receives his brother’s blessing.

Well, as you can imagine, Esau is **pretty angry** and vows to kill his twin brother*.*

Jacob hears about it and leaves home.

**By the time we reach Genesis 32,**

 Jacob has been gone from home for 30 years

but because he is pretty ingenious and crafty he gets ahead and **BECOMES REALLY WEALTHY**.

 Jacob spent his life living up to his name...

His name, Jacob, means “**grasper**,”

because when the twins were coming out of the womb Esau came out first but Jacob’s little hand came out right after Esau and grabbed ahold of his heel, like, *“Come on back in here; I want to be first”*).

But the name **“Jacob” can also mean, “deceiver, or liar”** and those two meanings pretty well sum up Jacob’s life.

He spent his life grasper for things through **lies** & **deception.**

Jacob would have made the **perfect used car salesman.**

But God directs Jacob to return home in Genesis 31...

 **Jacob obeys but as he gets close to his home,**

He gets word that **Esau** has come out to meet him with **400 armed men**,

Which is never a good sign,

So Jacob, who but forgot to bring his own personal army, is in despair.

 So, Jacob begins to pray to God for deliverance

 **That’s where we find Jacob wrestling with God**

 Some say it was an Angel,

**but most scholars agree it was God.**

 **Jacob leaves the wrestling match a different man**

He has a permenant limp from God knocking his hip out of socket.

He has a new name – **Israel**

**He has a change of character**

 But the story ends with Esau & Jacob meeting...

 **God changes Esau’s heart too**

 **They reconciled together as brothers.**

 Jacob goes on to father the Jewish nation.

 One of his descendants was Jesus Christ.

I believe this story serves as picture of prayer for us...

 *It shows us three things about prayer:*

**SOMETIMES THE BLESSING OF GOD COME THROUGH PERSISTENT PRAYER**

Martin Luther said that this story of Jacob wrestling with God gives us a picture of wrestling with a ***seemingly* hostile** God in prayer.

Luther points out this is a common image in Scripture.

**Syro-Phoenician woman** (Matt. 15) came to Jesus to get healing for her daughter.

Jesus said, *“Woman, it’s not right I take the children’s bread and give it to the dogs.”*

**He’s going to end up healing her but he *appears* hostile and indifferent to her at first.**

Jesus once said that prayer is like...

(Luke 18) an **OLD, POOR WIDOW** who needed justice on something but couldn’t get the judge to pay attention to her because she’s poor and couldn’t afford a lawyer or bribe him.

So she goes to his house day and night and wears him down through her **COMPLAINING & NAGGING**.

Finally, the judge gives her what she wants.

Truth is praying often ***feels*** like that...

**God often appears**

**HOSTILE**

**INDIFFERENT**

**UNCARING TO US.**

**Have you had this experience?**

**Maybe you prayed for something & God seemed silent**

 **Why did God do that?**

*He does so, Luther says, to see the strength of our faith in his goodness.*

**In other words, God resists at first to see if we really believe in Him or just want to use Him to get what we want.**

 **Its kinda like when I’m playing with Zane...**

 He pushes his hand against my hand

 So I’ll give a **little resistant just to test his strength**

 The Truth is...

*God being* ***distant or uncaring*** *is just an illusion.*

**So press through in your praying**

*Some answers are* ***only given after a night*** *of wrestling.*

**So press through in your praying**

*Do you feel like he doesn’t care about your broken marriage, your unsaved husband, your wayward child, your lost friends?*

***Just press through in your praying***

Here is what God is showing us

When you push with **persistence** in your praying,

and get past the **resistance**,

what you’ll find is not **indifference**,

what you’ll find is the **compassion** of his **presence**.

*Never* doubt God’s goodness.

There’s **so much grace** that flows off of his table that even if you have only the worthiness of a dog, there’s enough for you.

**Just keep pressing through in your prayers**

Sometimes the blessing of god come through persistent prayer

 *This story also shows us...*

**THE BLESSINGS OF GOD ARE NOT OBTAINED BY OUR CONTRIVING**

*27 And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” 28 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.”*

See when the guy asks Jacob what his name is,

**The point is not that he doesn’t know Jacob’s name.**

Of course he does

He is God – He knows all things

He wants Jacob to admit it.

*“My name is Jacob.”*

**By admitting his name...**

 **He is admitting to his life of lies and deception**

Remember when Jacob had taken the venison to his dad,

**His dad had asked him what his name was,**

He lied and said, “My name is Esau.”

**Now he tells the truth.**

“My name is Jacob.

 I’m a deceiver.

I’ve **tried all my life to obtain** these blessings for myself by my own manipulative means.

**Now I am repenting.”**

 **And so God gave him a new name,**

**Israel**, which speaks of ***God*** giving the blessing,

not Jacob wresting it for himself.

 **Truth was the blessing had always been Jacob’s**

 God told Rebekah...

**Genesis 25:23 —** 23 And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

**But God had to bring Jacob to the place where he was ready to receive the blessing of God.**

 Some of you have...

**Spent all your life striving;**

deceiving;

wrestling;

worrying to get some “blessing.”

**The blessing you are searching is not going to come from those things;**

**It going to come by confessing**

**it’s going to come by submitting**.

**It going to come by surrendering**

 This story shows us:

**Winning the blessing comes by losing to God**.

 Remember what James says...

**James 4:2 *—*** *2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.*

 Friend – Are you ready to wrestle with God?

**Are you ready to receive the blessing God has for you?**

 I have to warn you.

**You better be ready for God to do some changing**

Are you ready for God to turn your world upside down?

Are you ready to lose in order to win with God?

 *The blessings of God are not obtained through our contriving....*

**GOD IS THE BLESSING THAT WE SEEK**

 Notice that at the end of this encounter,

God does not say to Jacob,

 **“Ok, everything will be fine.**

. God simply says,

**“Go. I am with you.”**

There is no promise Jacob will live through the encounter with Esau.

In fact, **God has made him limp** now, so now it’s even impossible to run away!

What God assured to Jacob in this wrestling encounter is his **personal presence**.

Jacob got the ***restoration of relationship***;

**A blessing that was greater than earthly blessing.**

Whatever you are searching for...

**it can’t replace God!**

God sometimes withholds that blessing that you seek from you to teach you that.

***A relationship with God is better than any of his blessings.***

That’s what emerges from this night of wrestling.

 **Let me put it this way:**

Jacob did not get a **RESOLUTION** to his problem.

What he got was a **RELATIONSHIP**.

You’re going to have to choose between those.

 **Do you want a resolution to your problems?**

**Do you want a relationship with Jesus?**

 Remember Paul...

He **asked 3 times** for God to give a certain blessing, and finally God said, “*Paul. No*.

*But my grace; my presence will be with you.”*

God **may not promise** you he’ll get you

the **job**

the **boyfriend**

**heal the person** you desire.

But he does promise **himself**.

 God is the blessing we seek...

 **The reason why God calls us to prayer**

 Its **NOT** so we can get things from Him.

 **It is so we can get closer to Him.**

 Show me a person who has committed to their life to prayer

And I will show you a person whose live is **marked by God’s abiding presence.**

**Friend – What do you want more than anything in 2018?**

 Maybe it’s to **lose weight** (I guess I need to try that once)

 Maybe its to **find success**

 Maybe its to **find someone who will love you**

 There is nothing wrong with those things

 **But I have to warn you**

 **You may not get there!**

 But if you desire to get closer to the Lord

 The Bible promises:

**Jeremiah 29:13 *—*** *13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

**I don’t know about you...**

 But I want to be closer to the Lord in 2018

 And I want to see revival in my own soul

 I want to experience what Jacob experienced.

 I want to see our church experience God’s blessing

**2 Chronicles 7:14 *—*** *14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

 **Will you join in prayer this year for revival?**

 Will you dare to wrestle with God with me?

 Will you commit yourself to prayer in 2018?