

Wrestling with God

Genesis 32:22-32

PW Emerson – 1/20/2019

Genesis 32:22-32

²² That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 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. 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."

²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

³² 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.

INTRO

In Life, there are lots of different "meetings"

- Maybe you've been to a committee meeting or board meeting at a church
- Maybe an experience when you are meeting someone for the first time – an exchange student, new boss, or someone who gave you a spark (ask any married couple if they

remember the first time they meet their significant other – and they'll tell you it was electric

- Perhaps you've been to a business meeting

- If you ever read Dilbert, you know that business meetings have a reputation for being boring, non-productive waste of time.
- I know what you're thinking, I didn't need Dilbert to tell me that – I learned it on my own!
- IMI Corporation (Computers & components manufacturer)

In every conference room is a poster with 2 or 3 hippos with their mouths wide open and the caption says, "When all is said and done, more is said than done"

Meetings, in general, drive me nuts.

What about a meeting with God?

- I'd characterize a meeting with God as more like an "encounter"
- It's far from boring
- It's quite powerful
 - Maybe you have heard someone is humorous and tell great jokes
 - Maybe you've heard a great motivational speaker
 - BUT these folks are nothing compared to a meeting or an encounter with GOD

In today's text, Jacob has an encounter with God

- It's powerful
- It's life altering
- It's interactive

So let's take a closer look at this encounter – because much of it is similar to the meetings and encounters we all have with God.

In takes place at “Jabbok”

Jabbok means "a place of passing over." It also stands for struggle; to empty and pour out
Jacob’s struggles brought him to this place.

I pray that our struggles bring us to God.

I PROBLEMS BROUGHT JACOB TO THIS ENCOUNTER

Background – Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of the family inheritance and blessing years ago – and now Jacob is returning to see his brother (who Jacob doesn’t expect to be a happy camper)

Too often we think we have to get things “in order” before we can come to God, our creator

Fortunately, God says “I’ll take you just as you are – problems included.”

Prodigal Son Story – When there no other options left, then he returns. In a modern case like this, the father might refuse saying – you had your chance!!

- The father welcomed him with open arms

2 Corinthians 12:10

¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Jacob’s hardships, his weaknesses, led him to this point where he is finally relying on God

Read the Bible and look at the miracles. You noticed that all miracles start with a problem. You can't find one miracle in the OT or NT that doesn't start with a miracle. The good news is that if you have a problem, you are a candidate for a miracle!!

Jacob – his terror of meeting his brother came to God. All of our problems in life should lead to a meeting, an encounter with God

A lot of non-believers today have a God-moment in the midst of problems

- Life where drugs rule
- Lost job

People throw up their arms and say to God – I'm clueless!

Jacob is having one of those moments when everything his father & grandfather taught him about God is what he is wondering about.

- He knew what his life of lying, cheating, etc got him – always on the run

Maybe there is something to God.

1 Peter 5:6

°Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Problems brought Jacob to a God encounter – it may be the same for you

When you have a God encounter,

II BE READY TO BE CHANGED

Pre-marital Counseling

- Counselors say that both people must be willing to accept the other person “as is”
- Nothing destines a marriage to failure more unavoidably than one person going into it with the thought that he or she will change the other once they are married

God has the power to change and transform us

Surgeon – for example,

- When you go to a hospital for an operation, you do so
 - Because something is wrong with your body
 - You trust the surgeon can change it

When there is something wrong with our soul, we should let God be our surgeon, trusting God to change us for the better

Jacob, in this meeting / encounter with God, has his character, his very nature changed to the core

NAMES – Let’s Look at Jacob’s Name

- Today, we pick names because they sound cute or we name a child after a relative
 - We don’t name our kid Muthesula because he’s going to have to write it 1000 times before he finishes elementary school
- Names back then meant something – they reflected a person’s character
- Jacob means “deceiver” or “liar”
- The one Jacob wrestled with asked his name. And for him to say “Jacob” was to be admitting his character

- But because of his encounter with God because he was so radically changed, his name was changed to “Israel” which means “Having power with God”
- God does that a lot – gives people a new name to go with their new character
 - Abram – Abraham
 - Jacob – Israel
 - Saul – Paul
 - FOR US when we are CHANGED BY GOD, we are given a new name CHRISTIAN which means ONE WHO IS IN CHRIST

Think for a moment. Your name was picked by your mom or dad.

What about if God had picked your name? What would it be?

- Malachi – God’s messenger?
- Eleazer – God’s helper?

When you have a God-encounter, be prepared to be changed!

III FROM THIS MEETING / ENCOUNTER WITH GOD, WE COME AWAY WITH A LIMP

- For Jacob, that was figuratively and literally
- Through out his life, Jacob relied on his own abilities & cunning to get whatever he wanted
- Now, about to face an angry long-lost brother, he MUST rely on GOD
- Jacob “will not let go until you bless me”
 - He has already gotten his hip socket wrenched out of place – but he struggles on because for the first time in his life, he realizes he cannot go forward without GOD

○ I remember a day I had last year ...

- It was a day what they called in ancient Hebrew a “bad hair day”
- I was working on “this” which wasn’t going quite right
- And “that” didn’t work out at all like I planned
- BUT then something happened that reminded me that I need to depend fully on GOD
 - God said, “Give up your type A perfectionism” – and let me handle things!
 - God reminded me that it’s not MY ministry or my church - I’m working on, it’s God’s church, God’s ministry, God’s mission

I came away from my experience with God with a limp because I was *leaning* on God.

If I cling to my type-A perfectionist nature, there’s no way I could be a lead pastor

- Other people aren’t type-A perfectionists

I couldn’t be ministering to 5 guys living at my house – NONE OF THEM are type-A or perfectionists.

- That’s ok – God tells me to take them as they are

How do I deal with the migraines I get? I rely on God.

If we are going to reach out to others and serve God, then we make ourselves vulnerable. We might get hurt.

I got a drill dropped on my head on a mission trip! What was the alternative? NOT going on the mission trip!

- Not ministering to the 30 people on the trip
- Not ministering to the 8 families whose homes we worked on
- Not seeing people transformed from the experience

CONCLUSION

Film going backwards Illustration

Often in life, we should have a meeting or encounter with God

- God can take the problems and reverse them right out of us
- God can rewind than sinful nature within us
- And allow us to come away with a limp – so we will *ALWAYS* be leaning on Christ.

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit

I want to be drunk on the spirit – that's what Jacob wanted.

I love Jacob's attitude.

Think about it ... he's wrestling with God ...

- God could have ended the match in the blink of an eye
- God allowed it to go on ... ALL NIGHT!

Why?

It showed how badly Jacob wanted God's blessing.

It showed how badly Jacob wanted to be changed by God.

It showed how badly Jacob wanted to be with God.

Jacob wasn't just praying.

He was holding on for dear life!

I pray that we all have that same

- Attitude
- Drive

- Desire
- determination

To persevere through **WHATEVER** to be with God!