

Our Mission:
*To share Christ with
the world and grow
disciples for Jesus*

Peace Lutheran Church

Praxis (Practical Application of Theory)

Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Jacob was literally between a rock and a hard place. His brother Esau, whom he had cheated out of his birthright long ago, was heading his way with an army of men. Chasing him from behind him was his uncle Laban along with his servants, whom he also had cheated. If this was a morality play, Jacob which means 'cheat,' would appear to have met his match. But in the darkness of the moment, he encounters a messenger of God. Once again, he seeks a blessing, and it comes in the form of a new identity. No longer is he a cheat but one who wrestles with God and has overcome.

Theology Connection:

As with last week, God makes a personal or incarnational appearance, but for what purpose? It seems as if God has picked a fight, and Jacob is not going to back down. Perhaps we can take comfort from this text, knowing that it is not a bad thing to wrestle with God. Perhaps it is okay to express our doubts and our questions as we are faced with difficult dilemmas. Might our vision of God be magnified or diminished by what we consider to be the problems of life?

Application:

This story is a great reminder that God doesn't wait until we get our act together to be present in our life. This story is a reminder, that God's involvement in our lives always involves costs, both on his part and ours. While God's grace may be freely given, it is won at great sacrifice by all. Have you invited God into your struggles? Have you tried praying, asking for God's guidance as you face tough decisions in life? How would you tell the story of your encounters with God?

The TEXT: **Genesis 32: 9-13, 22-30**

⁹ And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,' ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies.

¹¹ Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. ¹² Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.'" ¹³ So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau,

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."

ADULT

Prayer: Dear God, please open my heart to hear and understand your word of love and salvation. Let my response be praise and joyful service. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Pastor Al suggests, "Perhaps we can take comfort from this text, knowing that it is not a bad thing to wrestle with God."

1. When was the last time that you wrestled with God?
2. What was it about? A Bible passage? A lost job or dream? The relentless changes and challenges that this life brings? The death of someone you love?

Pastor Al continues, "Perhaps it is okay to express our doubts and our questions as we are faced with difficult dilemmas."

1. What do you think will happen if you tell God about your doubts and questions?
2. Will the God who is mighty enough to create all things and sustain it through his Word be surprised, insulted, stumped?
3. Or, will our God, Heavenly Father, King, Lord, Savior, and Friend willingly engage us in anyway necessary to change our name and bring us closer to Him.

Pastor Al asks, "Might our vision of God be magnified or diminished by what we consider to be the problems of life?"

I would love to hear your answer! Drop me an email and I'll take you out for coffee and listen!

YOUTH

Please read Genesis 32:22-30

This is a story about Jacob having a wrestling match with God.

Can you relate?

I think we have all had a "wrestling match" with God before, over some issue or experience good and bad.

This story reminds us that God does not abandon us but that he strives with us while we are wrestling.

How many times have you asked God Why is this happening to me? I think we can all relate to this question. Maybe we don't know the answer at this time but rest assured, God is with us and God does have an overall plan.

Sometimes you have to endure the pain to get to the happiness, the good news is we never have to do it alone because God is always with us.

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for always being there for us. Help us trust in you even when life stinks. Help us understand that we might not know why something negative is happening to us but that we are not alone and that you do have a plan for us that will lead us to happiness. In Jesus name we pray! AMEN!

CHILDREN

READ & SUMMARIZE:

Jacob went to the Lord in prayer. He told the Lord how he did not deserve his love and faithfulness. He asked for the Lord to deliver him from his enemies. He gave thanks to God and was very humble. Jacob understood that he was not worthy of what God did for him or what he was asking God to do. Then Jacob took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and he had them all cross the river. They took all of their belongings with them as well. Jacob spent his night without his family, a man wrestled with him until the morning time. This man was God in human form. Jacob was not winning this fight; the man was beating him. The man told Jacob to let him go, because it was almost day break. Jacob did not want to let go of the man unless he blessed him. So the man asked what his name was, and he replied, "Jacob". Then the man told Jacob that his name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel. Jacob asked what the man's name was, but the man did not tell him. And right then and there, he blessed him. Jacob had seen the face of the Lord and still lived!

Think:

1. What did we learn about loving our neighbors from this story?
2. What does this lesson teach us about who God is?
3. How do you wrestle with God?
4. What do you say when you pray to God?
5. What was Jacob's new name?
6. What happened after Jacob wrestles with God?

Remember:

When we trust God with everything in our lives, we will be blessed. God always wants us to make the right decisions, even when it is hard for us. We can wrestle with God all we want, but we know that he is always right, and he knows what is best for our lives.

Pray:

Dear Jesus,
Help us to listen to what you tell us. Help us to make the right choices every day. We pray that you would fill us with your spirit so that we can shine your light everywhere that we go! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!