

Genesis Series – Part 5 - Entering God's Promises

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September 12, 2021

Tag Line: The Story of Life.

Glad to have you back. Today we are wrapping up our teaching series on the book of Genesis. Who would have known that these 3,500-year-old stories could be describing your life story with pinpoint accuracy. Don't you just love it when the Bible comes out of nowhere like a Ninja and karate chops you in the jugular?

III: Story of (Anna)

That's exactly what this book is about. God is always bringing us back, despite our failures, into his sacred order, his love, and blessings for our lives.

Challenge

Today I believe God has a challenge for us. Challenges aren't easy. They can push us past our limits. I believe God is holding the keys to destinies today. The keys to a life of purpose. Specifically, your purpose that no one else can fill. Every once in a while, God asks us to renew our sacred calling to him. It's going to take me a little time to build to our moment of challenge.

Jacob

Today we're going to look at a famous moment from the life of Jacob, a photograph, when he wrestled with the Angel. Jacob's story is moving like a train picking up speed, and we're about to jump onboard at the moment of greatest suspense.

...In which we find Jacob, he's fleeing for his life like a refugee, trying to cross the border to get back into his country, into the land God had promised him so long ago. Literally, he can't run backwards because his father-in-law Laban wants to kill him. Read this in Genesis 31.

They settle their disagreement by agreeing to stay as far away from each other as they can.

You know spouses come with in-laws. In-laws are like a box of chocolates, "you never know what you're gonna get." I'm so glad I don't have outlaws for in-laws. Now what my wife doesn't know is that when she married me, she married Out-Laws...

Slide: Family Photo



Jacob can't run backward. And he can't run forward because 15 years ago he swindled his brother Esau so bad, that Esau is still fuming mad. I'm gonna kill you."

You thought your family was dysfunctional: Jacob had a father-in-law that wanted to kill him. And a brother that wants to be the first to kill him. Jacob is being hemmed into this crisis moment.

God created this wonderful world. We messed it up. God promises to save and bless the world through a family. And here they come all swindlers and sheisters, if they don't kill each other first.

Read Genesis 32:6-13, 21

This is all building suspense. What is going to happen to Jacob? How is he going to get out of this alive?

Read Genesis 32:22-32 Let's read through it once to get familiar with it.

The first time you read this, it is one of those wonderfully weird Old Testament stories. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. It doesn't give up its secrets easily. It's everything our culture doesn't have patience for. Pull it apart.

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

- "Emptying" - the place where one river dumps all of its contents into the other river. In the silence of the night, you can hear the water humming against the rocks. The place of emptying. Turmoil of water in the dark.

23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone,

- Interesting Jacob left the land of his father's fleeing from Esau carrying nothing but his staff—utterly alone. And fate would have it, now in the darkness, Jacob is in a panic, and he's kissing his family maybe for the last time, after all he's accumulated and all he's accomplished, all he's survived and all he's built, he's alienated from it all. In order to save it, he has to give it up.
- He stands completely alone, and lonely. The place where one river empties its identity into the other river. Two rivers come together, and one river ceases to exist.
- Every believer has to come to place of emptying,
- **Every believer has to come to the place of complete surrender to the Lord.**
- **I have been crucified with Christ, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**
- What do you want to keep: the things you've earned or the things the Lord wants to entrust you with?

and a man wrestled (grappled, kicked up the dust) with him till daybreak.

- What the world. Where does this guy come from? 2 minutes ago, this place was crawling with dozens of people who were on the lookout for.
- And why suddenly do they have a Friday Night Smack Down?
- **We need context. We have clues.** At three significant moments in Jacob's life, he has visions and encounters with angels. And those encounters always have to do with the promise God made to his fathers about this land.
- **Genesis 28:13-14** As Jacob is fleeing the land of promise he has a vision of the angels of God ascending and descending the stairway and he sees the Lord standing at the top of the stairs and says, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

2 Points of Application:

- **Your vision for your future and living a happy and fulfilled life should include the Lord.** If you're thinking about all your dreams for your family and your business and vacations and God is nowhere in your plans, then those aren't his plans.
- God's plans will always connect you more closely to his presence, and the rhythm of his presence.
- **Your vision for your future and living a happy and fulfilled life should always include the people or nations God wants to reach through you.**
- God's plan is always to bless you in the process of you blessing others.

- Jacob makes a vow: “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God... (I will serve your vision for my life)
- Genesis 31:10-13 Jacob has a vision of an angel. “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.”
- Genesis 32:1 Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, ‘This is the camp of God!’ So he named that place Mahanaim!
- So, we have clues in the text that Jacob is in a moment of life crisis, he just cried out to God to save him, and he’s standing on the verge, God you’re either going to fulfill your promises to my family or you’re not. I need an answer. I believe Jacob suspected something supernatural was happening.

25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched (gentle) the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

- What kind of force is required to wrench your hip out of joint?
- This is all so confusing. How could an angel be overpowered by a man? But if this is just a man, how could he dislodge Jacob’s hip with a gentle touch? It’s all so contradictory.
- **When the man saw that he could not overpower him.**
We have a phrase, “when he makes up his mind...” He will move heaven and earth to get what he wants. The will of a man. The only force in the Universe that is as powerful as God’s will, is man’s will. God will never destroy your free choice.
- God will always honor your will, even if your choice destroys yourself. Which is what Hell is—the fulness of self-destruction and rebellion. That’s how sacred free will is.
- This same God that honors your will, can dislodge limbs with a delicate nudge.
- God has ways, sometimes of nudging your finances, or your vocation.
- He can get your attention in a moment with pain.

26 Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

- Comedic. Is that how this works? We just came out for fun to wrestle in the night and night, you’re just asking to pack it up and call it a night. I have to get back to my wife.

But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

- Part of the discovery process in the wrestling: What is in your heart? How far are you willing to take this? How badly do you want it?
- When we really wrestle with things with real weight, things of real consequence, if you’re going to wrestle with God, or wrestle for God to bless the world through you, or wrestle for your prodigal child to come home, or for your business to actually mean

something in the world, wrestle for your life to mean something significant, it's going to come with a cost.

- We want inheritance without a price tag. Many Christians want the blessings without the pain and there's no such thing.
- **Your struggle always results in someone else's breakthrough.**
- Christ dies on the cross so that you can live.
- It's better to have purposeful pain, than meaningless pleasure.

27 the man asked him, "What is your name?"/ your character/reputation? Who are you?

"Jacob," he answered.

- He forces Jacob to confront his nature, to be honest about his criminal record.
- This is the climax.
- I am "heal grabber." Everything I have swindled away from others. I don't deserve it.
- And Jacob has left a trail of carnage. Maybe you have history of baggage that keeps showing up everywhere you go. You can't get away from it.
- Sometimes we think we can bury the past, sweep it under the rug and forget about it, burn bridges, or keep drowning out the regrets with noise, busyness, ambition. We can run away from one marriage only to realize it followed us into our second marriage, because "it" happens to be "me". The problem is in me.
- **You can sabotage your new blessing if you bring your old nature into the new promise.**
- God trying to pin you down and do heart surgery. Are you still running?
- Jacob is face to face with this angel who is forcing him to really see himself, the uncomfortable truth of his own nature, his unworthiness. In the place of emptying, where one river empties its life into another.

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

- God gives Jacob a new identity and a new direction to enter into his new inheritance.
- Jacob the struggler.
- **God wants you to contend with him for his promises instead of fighting with others over selfish interests.**
- In the place where one river surrenders all to the greater river.

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

This is the challenge Church!

It's not going to be easy. It may cost you your life. It will cause you to limp.

I believe Petra Church is at a moment of standing on the bank of the river and God is saying, you can be happy with your things. Or you can contend to enter into my inheritance.

I believe that all across the room the Holy Spirit is asking people to renew your sacred calling. To recommit to a life of real purpose, not a personal fantasy, not a life of comfort or blessing. But a life of substance. Self-sacrificial. The Holy Spirit is saying, are you willing to contend for somebody else's breakthrough? Are you willing to wrestle for the next generation? for your family? for your school? and your community? for your nation? Ask the father to put a new burden in your heart.

(I really want to create a sacred moment this morning for you to re-covenant with God.) God is holding keys of destiny. But you have to go through him first. It's going to cost more than you thought. It'll require tenacity. You're going to walk with a limp.

Self-sacrificing purpose. Live for something bigger than yourself. You can contend with God
Open my heart for the nations. Open my heart for compassion.