



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes from Sunday 14th August 2022

The Fight of Faith by Andy Butcher

Read the passage Genesis 32:22-32 – Wrestling with God.

Our passage today is about wrestling with God. Ok, we know as Christians that we're in a daily fight with God's enemy and all that enemy has brought about in this world, but what is this? Wrestling with God?! Had a good wrestle with God recently?

In context, before we apply this to our own lives, let's look at the Jacob encounter.

Deep-seated family hostilities. Jacob the con-artist, the liar, the manipulator of people. His name means the deceiver, the grabber. Never-ending struggles. God had promised him that from him would come not just a nation but a company of nations yet he was full of fear and anxieties. At a pivotal point in his life he was about to meet his embittered brother Esau, who he had cheated out of his birthright and God's blessing. Esau was about to kill him, surely.

Powerless to control his fate, he lay down to sleep on the banks of the Jabbok river, where he finds his struggle is only just starting. God shows up via an angel. Wrestles with him until daybreak. Physio please. Jacob's hip disabled for the rest of his life. And then, climax of all climaxes, the angel wants out as it's daybreak, but Jacob fights on. The cheek of it. Jacob the guilty rotten scoundrel. "I won't let you go unless you bless me." Cheek and persistence rewarded. God blessed him there. Only then does he realise what has happened. 'I saw God face to face and my life was spared.' His name would be changed. Jacob DECEIVER to Israel HE STRUGGLES WITH GOD.

In our western culture, even often in our western churches, we celebrate wealth, power, strength, prestige and victory. We despise and fear weakness, failure and doubt. We know that this life is a mixture, that vulnerability, fear, discouragement and depression come with normal lives, but we see this as failure and lack of faith.

The apostle Paul, early champion of all that is positive in the Christian faith, experienced discouragements on a daily basis. 2 Corinthians 7.5 – We were harassed at every turn, conflicts on the outside, fears within.' Yet how God blessed him!

Had a prayer wrestle recently? All the time I hear you say. In my twenties I was a Christian and looking for a Christian partner. Prayed, prayed, prayed again. Looked, looked, looked again. No-one. In my early thirties someone prayed a faith prayer over me to be married in a year and I was. If God had answered positively in my twenties my three kids wouldn't exist.

C.S. Lewis was asked to write a book on prayer. He didn't feel qualified. Two patterns he saw. Pattern A, pray knowing the answer is conditional, ie. if it is God's will. Your will be done. As Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. Pattern B, if someone prays, or better still two people pray together, or a whole church locally or across a nation prays, and they have faith in Jesus, the prayer will be answered.

He had seen one miraculous healing, someone he knew. He had prayed for countless others with no visible result. Twice in the twentieth century churches across the world prayed for world peace. In vain. Two world wars. God's will being done? Then I remembered that I wouldn't have existed

had World War 2 not happened. My parents wouldn't have met. God's will? Or should the prayers have shouted louder? Mystery.

This morning's Glasgow prophetic word - COME AWAY

You are coming into a place where you are beginning to experience me in a more intimate way.

I love when you seek and press into my presence with all your heart. Did I not say that those who seek me will find me when you seek me with all of your heart. I love my time with you. I love your undivided attention. In my presence there is fullness of joy, there is peace, there is love. In my presence is freedom to move into what I have called you to do and to be.

Allow me to strip away any and everything that has the potential to keep you stagnant. In my presence you will find the refreshing and refilling you so desperately long for.

You have asked for revelation and insight, and it will be found in my presence – in the secret, hidden place with me. Come away with me, my beloved. Let me share with you how I see you. Let me reveal my secrets, the plans that I have for you.

This is my invitation to you – COME INTO MY PRESENCE! COME AWAY WITH ME!

ACTIVATION: Find a quiet place to spend with the Lord. Relax in His presence and allow Him to shower His love on you. Ask the Lord to show you how He sees you. Let Him know how much you love Him. Write down what the Lord is speaking to you.

You have shown me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures for evermore. (Psalm 16.11)

So I went away, to Compton Bishop Church, under Crook Peak, a precious place from my past. I walked slowly up and down. Jacob was such a wretch Lord and you blessed him. I am as guilty as he was. Thoughts, words and deeds. And yet.....

You have shown me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Been back most days since. Blessed beyond words with those from Psalm 16. Pleasures for evermore. I thought Christianity wasn't about pleasures, Lord, I thought Jesus saved us from them! Rubbish says God, pleasures for evermore. Tremendous tingling! Comparatively, nothing else matters Lord. And God blessed him there.

Whatever you're facing right now, face God with it. Compartments of your life private? That's mine to deal with Lord, not yours. Open up. Bring him the lot, stock and barrel, and-doesn't He taste good!

Questions to wrestle with

1. What does this say about God?
2. What does it say about you?
3. What's our response?