

Bible study for Sunday 2nd August 2020

Preparation

In our Bible Study this week we will be reading the following lectionary readings set for Sunday (2nd August):

- **Genesis 32:22-31**
- **Psalm 17:1-7, 15**
- **Romans 9:1-5**
- **Matthew 14:13-21**

When exploring this week's readings try following this pattern:

Pray a simple prayer first. If you are feeling brave, you could pray Jacob's prayer: "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." (Gen 32:26b)

Read one of the readings

Pause

Reflect on the reading

If you find it possible, imagine, prayerfully, being in the story with Jacob or with Jesus and the crowd. What do you want to ask Jacob, or God with whom he struggles; Jesus, the disciples, or the crowd?

Maybe you feel like an observer – what does it feel like to watch the story unfold?

Ask yourself

What, if anything particular strikes me in the reading?

Why does the story speak to me in this way?

What questions arise for my life?

After your reflection, you may wish to move on to another reading, but you don't have to look at them all.

When you have finished your reflections for the day, pray the final prayer:

Final Prayer:

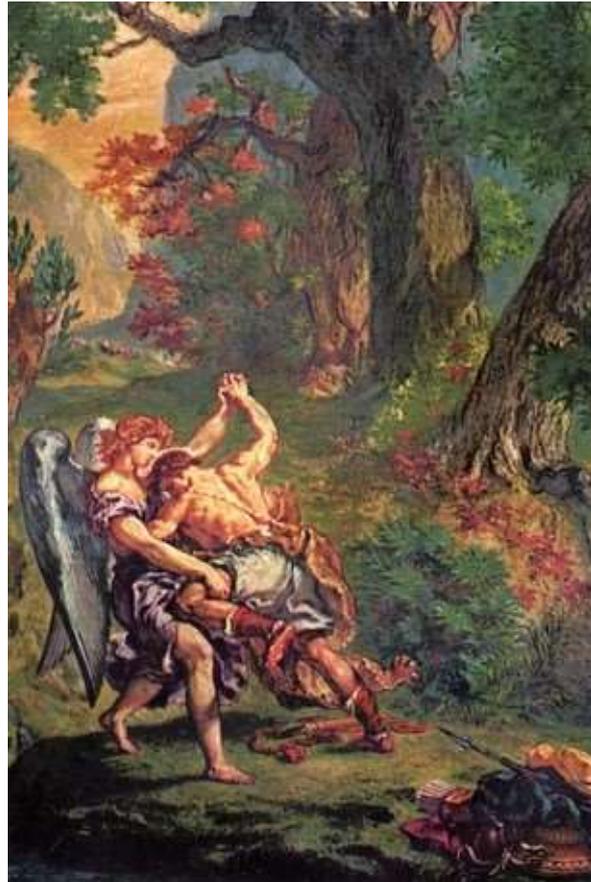
God of Jacob, you wrestled, wounded and blessed Jacob with a new name and a new promise, bless us too. Jesus source of life, you who blessed the crowd with bread when they were hungry, nourish us with your life, body and blood, that we may be blessed and a blessing. **Amen.**

If you'd like to look at some art, a poem and a short reflection please see below there's also a YouTube introduction to the Bible Study at [Introduction to Bible Study for Sunday 2nd August](#)

Delacroix's Jacob Wrestling with the Angel
a poem by Joseph Stanton

Jacob is wrestling with God
as if he expected to win.
The powerful diagonal of his musculature
drives hard to the left:
a wedge of fierce resolve.
The calmly poised Angel
receives in his opened arms
all the man has to give,
unmoved by earthly urgency,
and with a mere touch
to the hollow of human thigh
throws muscle out of joint.
We know that the Angel
will refuse the victory,
tell the defenseless man he has prevailed,
endow him with a wondrous name,
make him father to a chosen people.
But the outcome does not interest Delacroix.
His concern is all for the climax:
the hero's wild reach
for what he could not even begin to grasp.
Jacob's striving is an emblem
for Delacroix's art.
Grappling hard
with the inscrutable angels of imagination,
this lover of Mozart and Greek statues
strove to render his romance
Classical.
But his details give him away:
the mighty twist and grimace of trees,
a Nature that wants to overshadow
all that mere men and gods choose to do;
brush strokes that shimmer with an inner light;
colors that leap to the dance of bonfire design.
Delacroix,
the would-be reasonable gentleman,
could not subdue or let go
the unreasonable demons of his dreaming.
The wrestling itself
is what the pictures are.

[from: Imaginary Museum: Poems on Art, by Joseph Stanton. Time Being Books, 1999, pg. 23.]



This week, the story of the family we've been following through recent weeks gets personal between God and Jacob, as Jacob is renamed "Israel" which probably means, "he struggles with God." The tradition was that if you saw God face to face you would die, and Jacob, struggling with God until daybreak, is close to seeing God in the full light of day. Perhaps this is why God says "you must let go of me now." it would not be right for Jacob to die in the midst of the struggle, but Jacob is determined: he is greedy for the blessing only God can give. Is he willing to risk death in order to obtain it? Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, almost sacrificed Jacob's father, Isaac. Here, Jacob seems willing to sacrifice *himself* for God's blessing. God, however is not willing for this to happen and God decides both to stop Jacob and also to bless him. So it is, that the blessing comes at a cost. Jacob's faith brings blessing and woundedness. When his hip is touched, he is wounded, and he receives the longed for blessing.

Painting: *Delacroix, Eugène, 1798-1863. Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48070> [retrieved July 27, 2020]. Original source: www.yorckproject.de.