The Parishes of Crail and St Ayle

Reflections for the **church of the moment**, from Rev John Murray

Sunday 2nd August 2020

*Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

*Lord, in this time of worship would you equip us with all we need for the journey*

‘Be still and know that I am God’: Become aware of God’s presence with you.

Today, our readings are of situations where Jacob and Jesus had to wrestle with difficult times in their lives.

Genesis 32:22 – 32: 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. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 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. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. 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.”

Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.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.

**Matthew 14: 13 -14** (*Jesus has just heard Herod has killed cousin John the Baptist*)

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the town. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

*What stands out for you about these stories?*

***The Lord’s Prayer***

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

**Wrestling**

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In the red corner, weighing in with great possessions, but in fear and distress, anticipating a difficult family meeting, conscious that looking back he would have done things differently, and representing ‘doing it by your own wits’, welcome… Jacob.

In the blue corner, a gentle but steely young rabbi, just heard awful family news, and knowing this will also eventually happen to him as well, representing ‘living by faith and able to use what is there in the moment in a wonderful way’, welcome …Jesus.

Do you recall the Saturday afternoon wrestling matches on TV? Some said that it was play acting but to me it seemed pretty real. It was certainly real for Jacob. And for Jesus, well he must have had his own internal sort of wrestling bout: wrestling with his own vocation, his deep sorrow for what had happened to John, and feeling the grim shadow of his own hard calling. Sad, grief stricken, wanting just to be on his own. Yet, oh no, he finds himself chased down by this crowd, and the demands they bring. But see, compassion and care for others wins through, as it always did. And he toughs it out, bringing healing and sustenance.

What are we wrestling with at the moment! Name it, write it down, tell it to a good friend. What is making us sad, what is weighing us down, and we don’t need to be actually worried about, as Jacob was to discover. In lockdown someone sent me a video clip of cows going from one field to another and as they crossed the road, they felt the need to jump over the white lines! They did not need to do that. May our eyes be opened to all the things we do not actually need to do and can let go! And we may be thinking we have such small resources to meet all the demands in our lives at the moment. It would be much better we think to find comfort in escaping. However with Jesus by our side and in our midst, there can be healing and wholeness, because Jesus cares for us.

Jesus is praying over us and asking his Father to make things to overflow for us, that all our needs will be more than met, with a surplus. Jacob was surprised, the disciples were surprised, and probably the crowd was surprised. Friends, time for us to be 😯 surprised, at what Jesus can accomplish in our midst!

**Prayer of adoration and confession**

Lord, we come with intention today to be thankful and to count all our blessings. To remember what we have, not what we do not have. (*you might want to write some down)*. These gifts mean so much to us.

As we confess with intention our flaws, and our skewed ways of seeing you, others, and ourselves, we think of words like humility and repentance, and pray for a humble and gentle spirit to be within, and humble and gentle words to flow out from us.

Your sins are forgiven – go in peace! Grant us Lord, new perspectives and ways of seeing things around us in new ways, in true ways, and to know your light within, directing us.

*Ephesians 6:12: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against …the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*

**Prayers of intercession**

 Lord Jesus Christ, we come with our prayers for those who are wrestling today, be it with You, others, themselves, their past, present or future or some knotted mixture of these. For those anticipating problem meetings, or for those who have heard bad news. May they lay down living on edge by wits, and live with contentment in a wide space. (*If people and friends come to mind, just pause and remember them*).

We pray for so many places in our world where there is wrestling going on right now: places of strife, and war in a physical sense, and for the issues of race and gender discrimination, poverty and want, which are the cause of so much communal wrestling.

We pray for our governments and other governments wrestling with the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, and for all the organs of society, such as education, health, social services as they grapple with how best to go forward.

We pray for all those wrestling with their health, or wealth, or lack of it: for those whose income and wellbeing have been affected during this time .For those who are depressed and sad today: going through a dark night of their soul. Lord, be with them and with all those seeking to bring mental and physical health and wellbeing.

For those folk and issues which have been forgotten in this recent period, and do not appear on our screens as they did, in Syria and the Middle East. Lord in these lands which have seen so much wrestling, may you bring peace in our time.

And a time for our own prayers…

Lord, hear our prayers, Amen

Christ as a light, illumine and guide me.

Christ as a shield overshadow me.

Christ under me; Christ over me, Christ beside me, on my left and right.

This day be within and without me, lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

*(Northumbria Community)*



**Blessing**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore: Amen.

**Reflection for the week**

Where do we need to place our hands in the Lord’s hands, and know his strength and care?