

“THE NEW YOU” Sermon Series: Jacob Becomes Israel

Last week we talked about Abram, and how his name meant “Excellent/ Exalted Father”, but it took 86 years for him to even experience fatherhood with the birth of Ishmael (by Sarai’s maidservant)! Excellent??? Exalted???

He was 100 when he finally realizes just the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promise that he would be the “Father of multitudes” (Abraham), with the birth of his son Isaac! It took time for Abraham to live into his name!

Jacob’s story is a little different... His name applied to his life right out of the womb! The name Jacob literally means “to grasp at the heel” or “to cheat”.

Jacob was a twin... his brother Esau came out first... but Jacob followed immediately after, grabbing on to his brother’s foot during childbirth!

Jacob received his name based upon his first actions... & later actions would also confirm the appropriateness of his name... The “nature” argument!

Jacob’s upbringing would also contribute to his name! He grew up knowing that his parents were given a promise by God... His mother would be a conspirator in stealing his father’s blessing from Esau! The “nurture” argument!

And what about God? Didn’t God play a role in who Jacob would become? It was God’s Word/promise that told of a future where Jacob would have/be more than what his normal lot in life could ever be! What was Jacob to do?

And what about the effects that the environments that Jacob found himself in would have on him? Being sent away... Being deceived by Laban... Living in fear of Esau’s revenge... Jacob would be a product of his environment also.

Jacob was a self-centered... deceiver... cheat... thief... sinner... undeserving of God’s blessing! By nature... By nurture... By byproduct of his environment... But also according to God’s sovereign design and will!

All these factors contributed to a life that was difficult, devastating, and despairing for Jacob! He wanted to be blessed! Is that so bad? He wanted what God declared his future would be! Don’t we? But how do we get there?

Jacob went about pursuing God’s blessing all the wrong ways... Until he came face to face with God! Genesis 32:22-31

Jacob was in the worst circumstance of his life, & he starts to resort to all his old ways... deceiving... grasping... running away...but this time there was no escape!

The old cliché applies, “No matter where you go... there you are!” Jacob was trying to run from his past... his circumstances... himself... but he couldn’t!

Have we ever been there... Nowhere to go... Nowhere to hide...?

This time Jacob decides to engage with God... in battle!

He didn’t realize it was God at first... but the truth is, whenever we battle who we are, where we are from, what has happened to us in our lives, etc. it is always a battle with God, for He is the One who is sovereign over all!

Have we ever wrestled with these questions:

- “God, why did you make me this way?”
- “God, why did you put me in this family... this environment... this mess?”
- “God, why did you let this happen to me?”

If so, we too have been in a similar place as Jacob. What was our response?

- Did we do as Jacob did and grab on to God and not let go?
- Did we refuse to settle for anything less than God’s blessing thru it all?
- Did we choose to persevere, and refuse to throw in the towel?

When we hit bottom, we can either give up on God or engage fully w/ Him! We can either tap out, or face what is in front of us head on, even if that means facing God Himself! God can hold His own, but He can also hold on to us!

What was revealed about Jacob in the crucible of this moment, was not as important as what was revealed to Jacob about God!

- 1) God is present! Vs. 24 – “Jacob was left alone...” but not really!
- 2) God actually initiates & engages with us, even in our darkest hour! Vs. 24 – the man (God) wrestled with Jacob...”
- 3) God lets us wrestle back! All night long “until the breaking of the day!
- 4) God displaces the very things that are in the way! Vs. 25 – “Jacob’s hip was put out of joint...” No more pivoting... running away... self-reliance!
- 5) God makes us face the reality of our own identity/sin/name! Vs. 27 Blessing won’t come this time by Jacob trying to be someone he’s not! Jacob needed to confess his sin... acknowledge his name... be reconciled!
- 6) God gives Jacob a new name... Israel which means “He strives with God” or “God strives”. Song “I am holding on to you... I AM holding on to you!”

It’s in the midst of the storm/battle that we discover who God really is, who we really are, and what the gospel truly means! Let us strive with God!

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Jacob went about pursuing God’s blessing all _____ Until he came face to face with God! **Genesis 32:22-31**

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Have we ever wrestled with these questions:

- “God, why did you make me _____
- “God, why did you put me in this family... this environment... this mess?”
- “God, why did you _____ to me?”

If so, we too have been in a similar place as Jacob. What was our response?

- Did we do as Jacob did and grab on to God and _____
- Did we refuse to settle for anything less than God’s blessing thru it all?
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