

DATE: November 30, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 32:24-30

TITLE: "Genesis XX: Reconciliation"



Scripture is the Word of God. It teaches us the truth about God and about ourselves. I love preaching through books. When you go through an entire book you see the big picture of God's Word. In Genesis we have seen the wonderful revelation of God. God desires His love for humanity to be seen by his creation. We have also seen that again and again humanity has rejected that love.... humanity has rejected that revelation. But I believe we need to be honest. We can not point a finger at the men and women of the bible and say "oh how stupid." I think we can look in a mirror and see the same process. God reveals Himself to you and me and again and again we ignore Him. But God keeps coming. He has been called the "hound of heaven." If we allow Him... we can experience the presence of God. If we allow Him, He can bring reconciliation.

We have seen the struggles of Jacob for the past three or four weeks. We have seen that Jacob was manipulative, deceptive and very unwise in his relationships. His life was marked by

unhappiness and broken relationships. He broke relationships with his father, his brother, his uncle, both his wives and most of his children. For most of his life he lives with a broken relationship with God. Finally, in chapters 32 to 35 of Genesis we see Jacob come to a level of maturity in his relationship with God and his relationship with others. These chapters deal with the topic of reconciliation. He has left the Haran area. He has left the lands of his Uncle Laban and is returning to the Promised Land. He began this journey back home with this prayer...

Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' 10 I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. 11 Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children

Finally, Jacob has returned to his Lord. Finally, he has a time of confession. Finally, he learns to trust in the power of the Lord in his life and not his own power. We are going to see the results of this prayer. We are going to see the reconciliation of Jacob

Lesson # 1 Note the reconciliation of Jacob and God. I read earlier the story of Jacob wrestling with God. Again, *Genesis 32:24-26*

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 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. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Beth Moore has a study on this passage. Allow me to share a quote from her

We are to walk as people who have encountered God, and some of the most transforming encounters are wrestling matches. Dear One, the lost do not wrestle with God nearly as much as we who belong to Him. The profane and ungodly don't care enough to wrestle. We who are His often wrestle with Him the most, and at times we also seem to hurt the most.

I was reflecting upon my wrestling matches with God. Almost all the reflections are memories of pain. Often they have to do with relationships with others. I prayed for God to lead me in a relationship with a college girlfriend. God answered my prayer. We broke up. I wrestled. I did not like the answer... but I did not let go until I received the blessing of God.

When Erin told us she was in a problem pregnancy I prayed to God. He answered. He chose to bring the twins to Him with out the trials and tribulations on this world. I wrestled... I was tempted to let go... but I did not let go and the Lord has given me blessings.

2 Corinthians 4:17 gives this truth...

17For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

That is the message of this wrestling match. Don't let go. Never let go of God. God is

faithful. God will never forsake us.

Last February Kim and I traveled to Florida for a conference. One of the main speakers was Joni Earickson Tada. Many of you know her story from the books she has written. At 17 years old she was riding a horse... had a fall and broke her neck. Since that time she has been a quadrapaligic. Truthfully, watching her speak is hard. You can see her struggle to breath. She has to throw her shoulder back to move her arm back to expand her lungs. Her message was on suffering. I will never forget a story she told. A woman approached her and said that she was praying every day that God would heal her. Joni thanked the woman but asked that she redirect her prayers that God would give spiritual healing to her for her pride. She sees her handicap as a blessing from the Lord. She knows she will be healed... but understands that it will probably be when she leaves this body and gains her eternal body.

Don't let go! When you go through difficult times the temptation is to let go. The whisperings of Satan are to let go. The temptation is to become self sufficient. The Temptation is to become hardened and callous. If we make those choices we never discover the blessings of

the Lord... blessing on this earth and blessing for our eternity. I love these words of Paul in

Philippians 3:12

12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13**Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

I love the imagery. Hold tight. Strain forward. Press on. Forget the past. Do not let go.

Notice the end result of this wrestling match with God. *Genesis 32:26-28*

26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." **27** The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. **28** Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Do you remember what the name Jacob means? It means "deceiver" For his entire life

Jacob was the deceiver. He was the one who manipulated events for his own welfare. But God

changes his name. His new name is Israel. It means "one who struggles with God." Or "one

who encounters God." Israel became the leader of his family. Israel learned to worship his God.

Has God changed your name? Not literally.. But figuratively.

- Maybe your name was "anger" and he changed it to "longsuffering".
- Maybe your name was "independent" and he changed it to "servant on God."
- Maybe your name was "self" and he changed it to "caring."

- Maybe it was “popularity” and he changed it to “faith.”
- Maybe your name was “bitter” and He changed it to “joy.”
- maybe your name was “lonely” and he changed it to “content”

Has God changed your name. We are new in Christ. Rejoice! The old has gone and the new has come. Wrestle with God. Do not let go. Get through the hurt and pain. And receive the new name. Receive the blessing of the Lord.

Lesson # 2 Jacob was reconciled with Esau, his brother. Remember it has now been 20 years since Jacob ran away in fear of his life... afraid that his brother would kill him. Jacob is afraid to meet his brother. He makes elaborate plans to protect himself from this encounter. He divides his family and his property in half so that if Esau attacks only half his family will be killed. He sends Esau large gifts trying to appease his anger. Finally, after he wrestles with God, he builds up the courage to meet his brother. This encounter is described in *Gen. 33:4-11*

But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. 5 Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. 7 Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down. 8 Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said. 9 But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." 10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. 11 Please accept the

present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

The reconciliation took place. Jacob and Esau and Jacob and his father Isaac were restored. The truth is this... a byproduct of a reconciled relationship with God is a reconciled relationship with other people. Jesus, of course taught this lesson. (*Matthew 22:34ff*)

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

A reconciled relationship with the Lord causes us to desire a Christ centered relationship with others. This is not to say you need to be close friends with every one... but we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Do you have a broken relationship?

First pray. Pray for yourself. Pray that you will see the harm you have caused in the relationship. Pray for the person you have a broken relationship with. Not that God will smite them... pray that God would bless them. Pray for opportunities to heal the rift

Next approach the person kindly and humbly. Confess your errors. Ask for forgiveness.

Receive the anger. Again, you do not need to be close friends.. But have a Christ centered

relationship.

If the person refuses to forgive... if the person refuses to overcome anger.... go back to step one... pray.

The point is this... when we are reconciled to God we are new creations in Christ. All of our relationships are affected. Relationship with our spouses.... with our children... with our fellow employees... with our fellow students... With our friends... And with our enemies.

Reconciliation is the will of God.

Genesis 35 is the chapter that wraps up the life of Jacob. We will see him briefly in the story of Joseph but only briefly. In Genesis 35 Jacob goes home. He returns to Bethel. He builds an altar. He destroys all the other family gods (remember Rachel had stolen her father's gods). He worships God and he raises his family. Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin. Jacob is greeted by his father Isaac who then also dies a few years later. These are the final words....

And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. 12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him. 14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and

he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. 15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel (house of God)

The blessing of God continues and we are the recipients of the blessing. We remain in

the house of God.

AMEN