

August 2nd, 2020

Proper 13 (18) • Green

- [Genesis 32:22-31](#)
- [Psalm 17:1-7, 15](#)
- [Isaiah 55:1-5](#)
- [Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21](#)
- [Romans 9:1-5](#)
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Prelude <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrlIgu6Ewt8> no one ever cared for me like jesus
Hymn 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rrXC5uKVb4> 471 as the deer
Hymn 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8rgJcaltRs> 432 as water to the thirsty
Hymn 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUh5l-FhLps> 698 let us talents and tongues employ
Postlude <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJmxF-txkEg> celtic prayer virtual choir

Genesis 32:22-31 Jacob Wrestles With God

Cross on ahead of me, and leave room between herd and herd.

18 He charged the first group, saying: When Esav my brother meets you and asks you, saying: To whom do you belong, where are you going, and to whom do these ahead of you belong?

19 Then say: -to your servant, to Yaakov, it is a gift sent to my lord, to Esav, and here, he himself is also behind us.

20 Thus he charged the second, and thus the third, and thus all that were walking behind the herds, saying: According to this word shall you speak to Esav when you come upon him:

21 You shall say: Also-here, your servant Yaakov is behind us. For he said to himself: I will wipe (the anger from) his face with the gift that goes ahead of my face; afterward, when I see his face, perhaps he will lift up my face!

22 The gift crossed over ahead of his face,
but he spent the night on that night in the camp.

23 He arose during that night, took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children to cross the Yabbok crossing.

24 He took them and brought them across the river; he brought across what belonged to him.

25 And Yaakov was left alone- now a man wrestled with him until the coming up of dawn.

26 When he saw that he could not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; the socket of Yaakov's thigh had been dislocated as he wrestled with him.

27 Then he said:

Let me go, for dawn has come up! But he said: I will not let you go unless you bless me.

28 He said to him: What is your name? And he said: Yaakov.

29 Then he said: Not as Yaakov / Heel-Sneak shall your name be henceforth uttered, but rather as Yisrael/God-Fighter, for you have fought with God and men and have prevailed.

30 Then Yaakov asked and said:

Pray tell me your name! But he said: Now why do you ask after my name?

And he gave him farewell-blessing there.

31 Yaakov called the name of the place: Penieli Face of God, for: I have seen God, face to face, and my life has been saved.

32 The sun rose on him as he crossed by Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh.

33 -Therefore the Children of Israel do not eat the sinew that is on the socket of the thigh until this day, for he had touched the socket of Yaakov's thigh at the sinew.

33 1- Yaakov lifted up his eyes and saw: there was Esav coming, and with him, four hundred men! He divided the children among Lea, Rahel, and the two maids:

2 he put the maids and their children first, Lea and her children behind them, and Rahel and Yosef behind them,

3 while he himself advanced ahead of them. And he bowed low to the ground seven times, until he had come close to him, to his brother.

4 Esav ran to meet him, he embraced him, flung himself upon his neck, and kissed him. And they wept.

Isaiah 55:1-5 New International Version Invitation to the Thirsty

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor."

Romans 9:1-5 New International Version Paul's Anguish Over Israel

9 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Matthew 14:13-21 New International Version Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³ 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 towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

¹⁶ Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

¹⁷ “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

¹⁸ “Bring them here to me,” he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Sermon.

The theme for this morning is again Kingdom living. We have the Jacob example – which I think is really the example of what not to be. Certainly God honors His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Rebecca, but Jacob seems to be not just imperfect like the rest of us, but self centered on steroids. This week we find Jacob up to his old tricks. We learn only that he hangs back from his family group as they prepare to return to see Esau. Alone, somehow he encounters an angel who wrestles with him. Why would an angel be there? Most likely to act as a guard around Jacob as he travels home – after all it is God’s plan for him to do so. Somehow in the process Jacob gets caught up in wrestling this agent of God’s. The point isn’t the wrestling, it is that Jacob, true to form, demands a blessing. The angel repeats the blessing already given Jacob, but also marks him with an injury and gives him a new name. The old name – Jacob – heel grasper – is all about the Jacob we have come to know too well. This new name – and the people of the time placed enormous meaning on names – changes the man from the one who would connive to

one who has a very direct relationship with God. I think Jacob's perspective is straight forward. He is anxious about his return home, but perhaps as a sign of Israel and not Jacob, he leads the family as they encounter Esau and he immediately seeks to make peace with Esau. The wrestling seems to be a Divine moment of grace where Jacob gets to meet his angelic bodyguard and also receives what, we hope, is a new personality. He also learns that there are consequences to fighting with an angel. Moreover, and as Jacob himself recognizes, he has been shown grace simply by being allowed to live. In the Scriptural accounts I just don't see Jacob engaging in anything we could call Kingdom living. The good news is that in future chapters Israel is a new person. He has changed his behavior, but his old self and the lessons he taught his sons will come back to haunt him. There are consequences he will have to bear even if he is God's chosen vehicle. Jacob's mission has nothing to do with Jacob himself and everything to do with God.

Enough examples of bad behavior. Let's take a moment and reflect on what God is saying through Isaiah -

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;

and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

God is inviting us to His Kingdom feast. He offers food that is not of this world but will provide food forever. This is not food from the grocery, but the Divine nourishment that never goes bad or fails. He offers us the living water of Christ and his atonement. This statement is all about the Messiah and God's efforts to have us be reconciled with Him through Christ's atonement. It is absolute selflessness on God's part.

When Jesus teaches the multitudes he uses the opportunity for so many purposes. First, he is healing – doing the work of the Kingdom. Second, he is concerned for the welfare of the people. Unlike Jacob who is always so self focused, Jesus has immediate compassion for the crowd and calls on his disciples to test their faith to provide food for the crowd. Jesus is demonstrating – acting as a model – for what Kingdom living should look like.

What happens is not merely compassionate feeding, but a straight forward miracle that has its own purposes. Every miracle has a purpose beyond the actual miracle – in this case a meal. For sure, this event is about meeting the immediate food needs of thousands of people. But it is also about reinforcing to the crowd exactly who Jesus is – the Son of God. His ability to summon forth enough food for the thousands is concrete evidence to them of Jesus' divinity. It is also a miracle to the disciples – for they see more

clearly than the crowd exactly how the miracle happens (no banana boxes from Good Shepherd showing up here!) – and a lesson to them about what can be achieved in faith.

This morning's texts, then, on one hand give us the relatively negative example of Jacob and his continuing self centeredness. In his case, God is clearly at work but Jacob seems to not be able to do other than let his ego run free. The Gospel lesson – underscored by Isaiah - is a clear demonstration of what Kingdom living can be. The crowd is gathered together to receive the spiritual food that Isaiah speaks to and Jesus, our Messiah, intends to honor that gathering of the crowd by meeting their food needs. This is not like today, where one way or the other we can arrange sufficient food for such an event. As the disciples know too well, food is not readily available out in the countryside, nor would there be enough food immediately at hand in a village to feed this number. Yet, Jesus does so to honor their coming to him.

I think that there is another reason for this feeding and it ties back into Isaiah and the prophet's description of the Messiah. You may remember that John the Baptist, imprisoned by Herod for his forthrightness, sent word via his own disciples to Jesus, asking whom Jesus was. Jesus' answer then was

“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^[b] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

This feeding of the 5,000 is one of those signs of the Messiah. It is not a coincidence that the text that immediately precedes this one is the one announcing the death of John the Baptist. This miracle, then, is also a clear Messianic statement for all to see and experience. The Baptizer came and made the way, and now the Messiah is among us.

As we consider the texts and lessons, think again about what the Kingdom means. In an earlier text that surrounds his response to the Baptizer, Jesus talks about how others have tried to forcefully promote the Kingdom. Think in our own time and relatively current history about what we might term militant Christianity. The message that Jesus was providing in today's text and the earlier response to the Baptizer was that such militancy has no role in the Kingdom – that such compassion as the feeding of the crowd does. I suggest that we view Jacob's personal behavior not as something we should replicate, but as an example of God using very flawed people to his ends. And that far better for us to follow our messiah's example than the ego driven one of Jacob, even with Jacob's obvious Divine calling. The Kingdom does not give us an excuse to act badly. And at every juncture it is always far better to see what Jesus did than to look for human

examples and try to make them more than what they are – flawed people being used despite their flaws for God’s Creational purpose.

We are blessed beyond our comprehension and appreciation with what God gives us. We live by and in God’s grace alone, through his gift of faith alone, with the message of Scripture alone, by the saving atonement of Christ alone, all that we may give all glory to God alone. Amen.