

## 28.9.25 am

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Date: 28 September 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning, everyone. A warm welcome to the service this morning. A special welcome to those! We've got a few visitors with us today and it's excellent to see you. If you're able to stay! behind for tea and coffee at the end of the service please do so. There's a creche that continues just through there and if there's any who need to use the creche you can be encouraged to do so.

So the Sunday school go out after the second singing and visitors who are here who have children are more than welcome to take their children to the Sunday school. Intimations, I've got pages of them. I'm not going to give you all of them. You've read them and they're on the screens just now but the evening service tonight is at six. It's a Gaelic service, the monthly Gaelic service and that'll be taken by the Reverend Donald Dolan MacDonald and usually we would have a fellowship at the end of that but because we have the communion next weekend and the fellowship then we're not going to have a fellowship tonight and that also allows the YF to meet this evening at half past seven. So YF, if you could take note of that please.

Communion weekend, the schedule for the weekend I think has been on the screen and it's also on the email. One addition to what we would normally have is Thursday at half past seven there's an evening fellowship for the youth in the prayer meeting room on my left. All secondary school children and young adults. I don't know what the definition of young adults is but Cammie and Stuart have been organizing this so if you're looking for a definition of where you fit in the young adult bracket you can have a chat with them. But all secondary school children, young adults are welcome to attend for a time of testimony, praise and snacks. Friday at 12 noon we've got the Gaelic service and that will be taken by the Reverend Donald John from Kyla Scalpy so please be encouraged to come along to that service. It's great to have him with us for that service. The rest of the services Friday through Sunday will be taken by the Reverend Malcolm McLean and you have the times.

Friday 7, Saturday 7, Sunday at 11 and 6 as usual and we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the Sunday morning service. Anyone who wishes to join the communicant membership of the congregation, anyone who knows the Lord, who trusts the Lord but perhaps has been a secret believer for months or maybe years or maybe decades, please be encouraged to speak to me or any of the elders members. And encouraged to come forward and do this as Jesus instructs us to.

Blytheswood shoeboxes, the appeal is ongoing. Any questions, ask Tini or Marian about that, but there are boxes in the foyer and you can also donate individual items that the kids clubs can use to assemble boxes. The last thing is just a follow-on from the POV, the Presbytery Oversight visit I think it's called, the Quinquennial as we used to know it. So we had a group who came and visited the church, you filled out questionnaires and we had a congregational meeting and so the Presbytery then came back and fed back to us about some of the encouraging things and some of the things that were noted that we were asked to consider. And so there's one thing in particular that has come out from the POV and that's the need for, the desire for elders' visitation. So historically there has been a system of elders' districts but this fell into abeyance some time ago before I came here.

[ 3 : 5 6 ] The session has now agreed to a new system for visiting by elders which will complement and support that visiting provided by the minister. Members and adherents can expect to be contacted in the coming weeks and months by one of the elders with a view to arranging to meet at a mutually convenient time.

So all that just to say that we're going to do something not very new but actually something very old. We're going to go back to visiting for elders as well as the visiting that I would do myself. Other issues that came up in the POV are summarised in a short sheet, a page of A4 and it's not yet in the

FOV but Duncan is preaching in Graver and as he's heading there he's going to drop out the door. So for those who are going out who wants a summary of some of the things that were noted and that are ongoing, you can take that at the end of the service. These I think are some of the intimations but all that I need to read out just now. So let's begin now this time of worship and we will sing to God's praise. Sing from Psalm 46. Psalm 46 and we will sing from verses 1 to verse 7 of the Psalm. God is our refuge and our strength and straits our present aid. Therefore although the earth remove we will not be afraid. Down to the end of verse 7. The Lord of hosts upon our side doth constantly remain the God of Jacob's, our refuge, us safely to maintain. These verses will stand to sing to God's praise.

God is our refuge and our strength in space of present aid.

God is our refuge and our strength in space of present aid. Therefore although the earth remove, we will not be afraid.

God is our refuge and our strength in space of present aid. Though hills and restless seas be past, though waters God is our alguém The city of her God, the holy place, when the Lord most high have been above.

[ 7 : 21 ] For in the midst of the earth dwell, the pain shall have removed.

The Lord to her, I'll ever rule, and that might be true.

The kingdom's blue and red, the Lord most high have been above.

The heart of earth is wise, the end it held for fear.

The Lord of hosts upon our side, doth constantly remain.

[ 8 : 49 ] The God of chief concern, refuse, a safety to maintain.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer to God. Let's pray.

Our heavenly father, we thank you for this, your day.

The Lord's day, this day that we've been gifted, where we are able to be still and to know that you are God and that you are with us. We thank you for the command that we are given to stop work, all these works that are not of necessity and mercy.

We thank you that we have the command to stop, to be still, and to come into your presence in this special way. To gather together as your people, in the name of Jesus, knowing that as we do so, you have promised that you will meet with us and bless us.

[ 10 : 12 ] We thank you for the psalm that we have sung and the encouragement that we receive as we meditate upon these words. The Lord of hosts upon our side, doth constantly remain.

What an encouragement, what a blessing, what a joy it is to know that we come before the God who is almighty, the God who is eternal, the God who is holy.

And yet the God who is not against us, but who is for us, who is on our side. And Lord, we praise you for that.

And we recognize in some measure the wonder of that. You are the God who is holy. You are the God who is holy. And we are like Jacob.

We are sinners. And yet we thank you that you are our Lord, that you are our God. That Jesus is our Savior. And that we can call you our Father.

[ 11 : 19 ] So bless us, Lord, we pray. And give us to know the assurance and the peace that you are with us and that you are for us.

Sometimes we confess when life is difficult and when we go through difficult things that we have doubts that can crash in.

And we wonder if you are for us. But we thank you that as we look once more to Calvary and as we see the cross where Jesus suffered and died, we have that supreme illustration of how much you are for us.

Father, that you sent your Son into this world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin. Lord Jesus, that you are willing to come into this world knowing that you would be despised and rejected.

And yet you came and were one who lived the life that we could not live, that faithful life. And that faithfulness took you all the way to the cross where you laid down your life.

[ 12 : 29 ] So that we, if we believe in you, can have life that's eternal. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for the work that you do in us to show us that we are sinners and that Christ died for us.

And we pray that as we think about that once more today, and as we think about that with the prospect of the communion next weekend, we pray that every one of us would know the truth that Jesus hung and suffered and died to pay the price for our sin and rose from the dead, promising resurrection, everlasting life to all who believe.

Give us faith, we pray, that we would all believe. We pray for those who may be wrestling at this time as the communion season approaches, some who may already believe and who may have believed for many years, but who have not yet come forward to profess faith in Jesus.

We ask, Lord, that you would give them the courage to come. We pray for those who may be far from you at this time, who may once have sat at the table, who may once have walked close with God, but who are at a distance at this time.

We thank you, Lord God, that your grace is saving and keeping grace. And we pray that you would draw back to yourself those who may be at a distance. And we ask, Lord, that over the weekend, as we come together as your people, that we would know your blessing and your presence.

[ 14 : 01 ] Be with Malcolm, be with the Reverend Donald John as they prepare to come, that you would bless them in their preparation and guide them. And we pray for those who would desire to be with us over that weekend and over this day, and who are struggling in their homes with illness, with different ailments.

Lord, that you would have your hand upon them and that they would know that you are with them and that they are remembered and loved at this time. We pray for those who are sick in hospital. We continue to pray for Lydia, that your hand of healing would be upon her and that your blessing would surround them as a family.

We pray for those who are grieving, those who are anxious, those who are lonely, those who are battling with addictions. We continually see need in us and around us.

And we ask, Lord, that you would meet us at the point of our need. So go before us, we pray.

Enable us in this hour to worship you in spirit and in truth. And we pray all these things together with the forgiveness of our sins.

In Jesus' name, amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? Amen. Amen. How are you guys all today?

[ 15 : 27 ] Are you all well? Is there any more to come? No? Anything doing today? Any good news? Any exciting things?

Is it anybody's birthday today? Amen. Is it your birthday today? No, it's yesterday. Oh, yesterday. Happy birthday yesterday. No, it was Benjamin's birthday yesterday.

Oh, yeah, it was Benjamin's birthday yesterday. I thought another hand went up as well. Benjamin, happy birthday to you yesterday. What did you get for your birthday? A motorbike.

Watch out. Can you ride it yet? Can you ride your motorbike yet, Benjamin? Are you good at riding it? Can you do wheelies? No?

Maybe next Sunday. Okay, I've got something to show you today. And I have hundreds of these things, it seems, all around the house.

[ 16 : 26 ] Everywhere I go, every cupboard I go in, every car I open, every seat that I try to sit on, seems to have these things on them. So can you please tell me, what on earth are these things?

Shawnee? Kilts. Is it mine? Definitely not mine. So is this just any kind of kilt? Or is this a special kind of kilt? It's a special kilt. Is it a special kilt? Who said it was a special kilt? It's a special kilt. What's special about it?

It's a what kilt? It's the mod kilt. So if you put this kilt on, and if you put this tie on, what does that tell people when you're wearing it?

Well, you'd wear a kilt at a wedding, yeah? But this kilt is a special kilt, and it's a mod kilt. So if you wear this kilt, what does it tell the people when you're wearing it?

[ 17 : 47 ] It tells people that you go to the mod, but lots and lots of people go to the mod, and some of them wear kilts, and some of them don't wear kilts.

But this is a special kind of kilt. So this kilt tells us something, doesn't it, Jane? About who you belong to. So can I wear this kilt?

No, why not? Too small, okay. I asked for that. Just imagine it was a bit bigger, and imagine I was a bit smaller. Could I wear this kilt?

Could I wear this kilt? No, why not? I know it's too small. Yeah, but why else can I not wear this kilt? Jane, can I wear this kilt? No, why not?

I'm not part of the choir. I'm not part of the choir. And all sugar's too small. Doesn't do anything for your confidence, these talks, does it?

[ 18 : 52 ] I don't belong to the Harris Junior Choir, if that's what you're called. And so, because I don't belong to the choir, I can't wear this kilt.

But some of you, when you go off to the mod, you'll be wearing this kilt, you'll be wearing this tie, and everybody that's looking will say, that person there belongs to the Harris Junior Choir.

That's the choir that won all the medals. Now, So, this tells us that we belong to a choir.

Next weekend, we're having communion. And when we have communion, we take the bread, and that reminds us about the body of Jesus.

He gave his body for us on the cross. And we take the wine, and that reminds us of the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross. And when you're here next weekend, and when you're looking around in the church, you'll see lots of people, and they'll take the bread, and they'll eat it.

[ 20 : 04 ] And they'll take the wine, and they'll drink it. And do you know what they're saying? Do you know what we are saying when we do that? We are saying, I belong to Jesus.

I'm trusting Jesus, and I belong to Jesus, and I'm not ashamed to say it. I want to tell people through the bread and the wine that I belong to Jesus.

You're not ashamed to wear the kilt. Tell people you're from the Harris Choir. How much more should we be not ashamed to tell people that we are trusting in, and that we are belonging to Jesus?

So remember that next weekend when we come together. Let's pray, will we? Lord Jesus, we thank you for how much you love us.

We thank you for all that you did to make us your own. And we thank you that when we trust in you, you are our saviour, you are our friend, and we belong to you.

[ 21 : 08 ] You buy us, it says, through your blood. And so we ask, Lord, that when we go out this week to school and in college maybe, or to work, all the different places, we pray that we wouldn't be ashamed to say that we're trusting in Jesus.

And we pray that next weekend, if we're spared to see it, as we come together in this place, and as the bread and the wine are offered, we pray that we would not be ashamed to say that we belong to Jesus, but that we would say, through the eating and the drinking, that we belong to Jesus, that we trust Jesus, and that we love him.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now, and we're going to sing Mission Praise 987. Hear as love, vast as the ocean. And then in the chorus it says, Who has love, will not remember.

Amen. And then in the chorus it says, God bless you.

God bless you.

[ 23 : 32 ] God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. Genesis 32. We've been going through this in the evenings and Matthews in the mornings.

I'm switching at this today. So we're looking at this passage from Genesis 32 in the morning. And for those who are not familiar with this, I'll try and just make a comment or two as we're going just to

try and put it in context.

But this is an encounter that Jacob, we have Abraham whom God met and called to himself and then Isaac and then Jacob. Jacob isn't the nicest of characters.

I don't think we would have really had a whole lot of affection for Jacob. But he's somebody whom God took a hold of and literally took a hold of him in this passage that we're looking at this morning. [ 25 : 31 ] So it's the section from verse 22 to the end of the chapter where God wrestles with Jacob. Genesis 32 and at verse 22, this is God's word.

That same night, he, that's Jacob, arose, took his two wives and two female servants and his 11 children and crossed the ford of Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had.

And Jacob was left alone. And the man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

Then he said, let me go for the day is broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. He said to him, what is your name? He said, Jacob. Then he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.

For you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him, please tell me your name. But he said, why is it that you ask my name? And there he blessed him.

[ 26 : 47 ] So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, for I have seen God face to face. And yet my life has been delivered. The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Therefore, to this day, the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

Amen. And may God bless that word to us and give us understanding as we study it. We're going to sing again to God's praise from Psalm 46.

Psalm 46, the last two stanzas of the Psalm, verses 10 and 11 in Gaelic. Be still and know that I am God. Among the heathen I will be exalted.

I on earth will be exalted high. Our God, who is the Lord of hosts, is still upon our side. The God of Jacob, our refuge forever, will abide. We'll sing these two verses to God's praise in Gaelic.

[ 27 : 50 ] And we remain seated to sing in Gaelic. The Lord of hosts, is still upon our side.

The Lord of hosts, is still upon our side.

The Lord of hosts, is still upon our side.

The Lord of hosts, is still upon our side.

And we remain holy. Satsang with Mooji Satsang with Mooji

[ 30 : 56 ] Satsang with Mooji If you could turn back please to Genesis 32 with me and we'll pray as we go down.

Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word. And we acknowledge that this is a passage that may be unfamiliar to some of us.

It's a passage that relates to a place that is far from us, to a time that is far removed from us. And yet this is your word and every part of your word is useful for teaching, for correction, for encouragement and for working within us.

And so we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit that as we meditate upon these verses that you would be ministering to us and speaking to us, Lord, we pray as you spoke to Jacob of old.

So help us, we ask, as we gather here. We pray for others you gather as we do. We pray for the denominations around us in this place, for the Free Presbyterian and for the Church of Scotland, for the Continuing, for every place where Christ crucified is preached.

[ 32 : 46 ] We ask, Lord, that you would be working to add your blessing to build your church. And we pray for those who go to different areas with the gospel.

We pray for Duncan as he heads to Graver just shortly. We pray for Stuart as he preaches at Calvinish this evening. We pray that you would be close to both of them and that they would know your help as they open your word.

We pray for South U.S. Benbecula. We thank you for Shoros and for Sarah for the induction that is scheduled for this Saturday. And we pray that you would bless them in ministry over there.

We thank you for answered prayer as that charge is filled. And we pray for other places that are vacant, that you would encourage these congregations. We pray especially for Crossbost today as

they're declared vacant.

And we ask, Lord, that you would be close to them and help them. And we pray for Calumian and his family as well, that your hand would be upon them at this time.

[ 33 : 51 ] The harvest is plentiful, as your word says. We are more and more conscious that the workers are few. And we ask, Lord Jesus, that you would be raising up others to come into the work of the ministry.

We pray for Gordon as he serves over in Carlow. We pray for Scott as he continues to serve you here and elsewhere. And we ask, Lord, that your blessing would be upon each one as we pray that you would bless us and help us.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. One of the things that I always look forward to over a communion weekend is hearing testimonies.

And I don't know if you should have favorite testimonies, but one of my favorite testimonies is the testimony of Malcolm McLean, who's coming to preach with us next weekend.

And I won't say any more about it. I won't spoil it for you. But what is a testimony? Well, a testimony is the story of how God meets with us personally.

[ 35 : 01 ] A testimony is the story of how we came to believe in Jesus. But a testimony is something that's always being updated.

So I might say to Malcolm next weekend, you'll share your testimony. He might say, I've told it before. And I would say, well, tell it again. Because it's always being updated, a testimony. A testimony, it begins at the point where we come to faith in Jesus.

It begins at that point where God meets with us and we put our faith in him. But a testimony is always being updated because the Lord doesn't just meet with us once and then leave us.

He continues to meet with us day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. He continues the work in our lives that he began.

And today what I'd like us to look at is how the Lord met with Jacob at a place called Peniel. Peniel means face of God.

[ 36 : 12 ] Jacob says, I've seen the face of God and I'm still alive. And I don't think the encounter that we have in the verses that we read is Jacob's conversion story.

I think if we want the story of his conversion, we have to go back to Genesis chapter 28. That's when the work of God, I think, in a real personal sense, begins in the life of Jacob.

So verse, well, chapter 28, you can take a look at that this afternoon if you want and see Jacob's conversion story as the Lord meets with him in that dream, in the second half of that chapter.

But then in chapter 29 through to chapter 32, the work of God continues in the life of Jacob.

And through some very difficult people, not least his father-in-law and uncle Laban, and through some very difficult circumstances, God is sanctifying Jacob, which means that he's changing him to be less like the old Jacob and more like Jesus.

[ 37 : 29 ] So Genesis 32 is where we've got to in our studies in the evening. And in this section that we read, God meets with Jacob in a powerful way.

And God meets with Jacob in order to deal with his undisciplined, his disobedient way of life.

Because that was very evident in his life. He was undisciplined. He was disobedient. He was not a particularly nice guy to deal with.

And he's not somebody you read in the passage of Scripture and think, well, this is a guy I'd like to have dinner with and spend time with. It's not that likable a character, Jacob. And so God, having taken hold of him, he takes hold of him again in a powerful, actually a violent way, to bring him on in his walk with God, to bring him nearer to God.

So, as we read of how God met with Jacob all these years ago, we can be praying that the same God, remember we sang in Psalm 46, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

[ 38 : 48 ] And let's be praying, as we read about this encounter that Jacob has with God, that we will encounter God. That the same God will meet with us, that the same God will work in us to bring us to himself, or to bring us closer to himself, if we are far from him at this time.

First point, as we just step through the verses of this narrative, is we find Jacob alone with God. So point number one, as we just try to give some structure to this, is we see Jacob, and he's alone with God.

Verse 22. The same night he arose, that's Jacob arose, and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

He took them, and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone. Jacob was left alone.

And back then, being alone was being totally alone.

[ 40 : 15 ] Jacob wasn't, you know, found on this evening in a hotel room, or a luxury tent with an iPad, and some AirPods, and an audio book to chew on for the evening. No screens, no sounds, to fill his time, and chase away the silence.

To be alone was to be totally alone. He's in this place that is called Penny Isle, and the terrain of that place, it seems to me that there's some hills, rugged, kind of rocky hills, and it's mainly arid desert land.

No houses, no streetlights, no traffic, just alone, in the literal middle of nowhere.

His two wives, he shouldn't have had two wives, but he did have, his two wives, his two female servants, his eleven children, they've all crossed the ford of Jabbok, they've all crossed this river ahead of him for some reason.

So they're on the other side of this river, and he's alone. He has no family to entertain him. He's no stuff, he has no possessions to distract him.

[ 41 : 43 ] He's absolutely, utterly, utterly, alone. And it was there, in that quiet place, at that quiet time, in the stillness of the night, that Jacob suddenly realizes that he's not really alone, but that God is with him.

he is alone with God. Question and application before we move on to the next point is, how often are you and I alone with God?

How often do we intentionally go to a place where there are no crowds around us, and no screens distracting us, and no stuff to get in our way and distract us also, but just you alone with God?

Because that's our calling. if we are disciples of Jesus, we are called to be with him. And it's such an important, it's the primary call that is placed upon our lives, and this sounds so simple, we are called as believers to be alone with God, and we know how important it is for us to have our daily quiet time, our time alone with God, God, but the reality is, it's a real struggle.

Life is busy, and it doesn't matter what season we're in, whether we're teenagers, and there's a whole lot of stuff going on in our lives, whether we're young mothers and fathers, and there's all the busyness of family life, whether we're a bit older, and our work is pressing in upon us, whether we're retired people who seem to be the busiest of all.

[ 44 : 07 ] Life is busy, and it's so easy for us to neglect our time alone with God. We miss reading the Bible and praying one day, and one day turns into two, and two days turn into three.

Before we know it, we're sitting back here like we were last Sunday. We haven't hardly opened the Bible in the last seven days. We've had no real time alone with God.

That, if we're honest, is a struggle we are always having. We struggle to be disciplined to make time to be alone with God, and so sometimes God will do for us what he did for Jacob.

and he will bring us to a place, to a point. Sometimes it's a difficult place. It's a painful place, but he takes us there just so that we will have time to be still so that he can meet with us, and he can start to deal with us in the way that is necessary.

So that's where this begins. Jacob, he finds that he is absolutely alone. No stuff, no people. He's alone with God.

[ 45 : 49 ] Point number two is he is assaulted by God. Because that's literally, physically what happened.

Verse 24, and a man wrestled with him. This is not a spiritual wrestling, this is a physical wrestling. Wrestled or grappled the word is in the original language.

A man wrestled, he grappled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

Now, just try and picture this. Because this is what actually happened in history. This is not just a made-up story, this really happened. So just try and picture this in the life of Jacob.

It's the middle of the night, absolutely dark, in the desert, completely alone, and in all likelihood, he's troubled.

[ 46 : 56 ] He's anxious about what the future holds. Now, for those who have been coming along in the evenings, we know exactly where Jacob is at this point in his life. For those who don't come along in the evenings, let me just give you a 30-second Netflix-style recap.

Jacob, where does he find himself at this point? Well, for 20 years, Jacob has been living far from home. 20 years previously, from this point that we find him here, he was thrown out of the family home.

He had deceived his father. He had robbed from his brother. The family dynamic, the family home, was in absolute turmoil.

And so, Jacob essentially is driven out of the family home. His mother, who loved him more than she loved, his brother, said to him, you have to leave here because your brother says he will have no rest until he has you dead.

He's going to kill you. So, flee to Paranaram. Go and find your uncle Laban. And just keep your head down for a while.

[ 48 : 07 ] Maybe your brother will cool down. Maybe your life will be spared. So, Jacob, he flees from the family home. And for 20 years, he's far away from home.

He has no contact with his brother, who as far as he knows, still hates him and still wants to kill him. And then God speaks into Jacob's life, and he calls him to return back home, which on the one hand is something that Jacob loves to hear.

He wants to be back home. On the other hand, he's terrified because he's thinking, how will my brother treat me when I get home? Does he still want to kill me? So, he's heading in the direction of home, not knowing how he's going to be received.

So, he sends messengers ahead, just to say, what are you seeing on the horizon? The messengers go out, they come back, and they say, Esau, your brother, he's coming to meet you. Jacob thinks that's excellent.

He says, but by the way, he's got 400 men with him. 400 men was code for an army. So, Jacob is terrified. he isn't expecting to have a sound night's sleep as he's out in the middle of this desert absolutely alone.

[ 49 : 27 ] Things are bad. And just when things don't seem like they can get any worse, they do. Because Jacob is suddenly assaulted.

A man takes hold of him, begins to wrestle him, grapple with him. This is a physical attack, and this isn't a five-minute flare-up. It's an all-night wrestle.

And we know from verses 28 and 30 that the man that Jacob was wrestling was God. So, he is assaulted by God.

James Montgomery Boyce, the commentator, says, most scholars consider this figure to be a pre-incarnate manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ.

We don't know that for sure, but that seems likely that this is the pre-incarnate Christ, who takes hold of Jacob and begins to wrestle him.

[ 50 : 36 ] So, the question is, what was God doing in this encounter?

And the answer, I think, is God was teaching Jacob that he must submit to him. Because that's what Jacob would not do.

He spends his life wrestling with people, he spends his life resisting people and resisting God, and so God takes hold of him and starts to teach him that he's going to have to start to submit.

That's how you win a wrestling contest, I think, isn't it? You keep on going until your opponent submits. And so God wrestles Jacob until eventually Jacob submits.

Wiersbe, the commentator, says, during that dark night of the soul, Jacob discovered that he spent his life fighting God and resisting his will, and that the only way to victory was through surrender.

[ 51 : 52 ] God will be going to do. So what was the plan of God in and through this painful experience for Jacob, where Jacob's hip was actually dislocated?

He limps for the rest of his days. What was God doing when he inflicted this upon Jacob? Well, God's plan was to do for Jacob what he had promised to do for Isaac and Abraham before him.

And that was to bless him. That was God's plan. He wanted to bless Jacob. A.W.

Tozer says, the Lord cannot fully bless a man until he has first conquered him. So the wrestling comes before the blessing.

And this is a picture for us to spend time looking at because sometimes this is how God works. Sometimes God will allow us to go through difficult experiences, sometimes painful experiences.

[ 53 : 21 ] Sometimes it feels like we're being assaulted, that we're being wrestled within the circumstances of our lives. And with a psalmist we might cry out to God and say, why is this happening? Why?

So why does God sometimes wrestle with us through difficult times? Is it because he wants to hurt us?

Well, no, it's not because he wants to hurt us. It's because he loves us and he wants to bless us. But for that blessing to flow, we have to learn to trust him, sometimes through hard times. And we have to learn to submit to him, as eventually Jacob did.

God, through this assault, was dealing with Jacob's swagger, his proud swagger.

[ 54 : 33 ] And he leaves him humbled, limping, but blessed. Alone with God, assaulted by God, the third thing, as we move much more quickly here, as we hear Jacob and he asks for blessing.

Verse 26, Then the Lord said to Jacob, let me go, for the day is broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

So all through the night there's been this struggle, this wrestling contest, but somewhere in the darkness of the night, somewhere in the pain of this struggle, Jacob has realized God is in this. Sometimes in the middle of this struggle, Jacob comes to the realization that this man who is grappling with him is not a man. This is God.

So what does Jacob do when he realizes that God is there with him? Well, he does two things. He holds on to him. He won't let him go.

[ 55 : 52 ] He can't fight anymore because his hip is dislocated, and I guess all the strength and a wrestle comes through the hip. So if the hip is dislocated, you can't overcome somebody, but Jacob, he just hangs on to him.

And he asks the Lord to bless him. And through this picture, we're being taught to do what Jacob did. When we go through hard times, when we're going through struggles, when we're asking the question, why is this happening?

Why is this so painful? Why is this so perplexing? What are we to do? Hold on to the Lord. Hold on to the promises of God.

Be much in the Bible. Searching for and holding on to the promises that God gives us. And when we're going through these hard times, and when we're holding on for dear life, ask God for blessing. Ask God for grace. And you might look at your life as I look at mine and say, as I examine myself, I don't deserve blessing.

[ 57 : 14 ] I don't deserve grace. But then, as we look at Jacob, neither did he. Grace would not be grace if we deserved it.

And yet, it's grace that is promised to all who ask for it. The blessing of God is promised to those who ask for it in faith.

Jacob, he asked for it. He pled for it. So, so, can I ask you, have you asked the Lord yet to be gracious to you?

Have you asked for grace? Have you asked him to bless you? Have you asked him to save you? Have you asked him to make you his own?

Because if we ask, we're promised he will do it. Asking for blessing, that's what Jacob did.

[ 58 : 29 ] The next thing he did, we're almost finished, is he admits his sin. He's alone with God, he's assaulted with God in this assault, he asks for blessing.

The fourth thing here is he admits his sin, verse 27, and he, that's the Lord, said to Jacob, what is your name? And he said, Jacob.

And this is very easy for us just to skip over. It seems like such a short, straightforward conversation, but there's actually more to this conversation than we might first realize.

Because when this man, this man that we know to be the Lord, asks Jacob, what is your name? He's giving Jacob the opportunity to admit his sin. The Lord is saying to Jacob through this question, what is your name?

Who are you? Tell me who you really are. And Jacob responds by saying, I am Jacob.

[ 59 : 37 ] And his name reflected his life and his character. His name meant deceit, cheat, sinner.

So Jacob, as he responds to this question of what is your name, he says, I am a deceiver. I am a cheat.

I am a liar. sinner. I am a sinner. And when the Lord meets with us, he asks us that same question. Who are you? And the truth is, we are all with Jacob. I cannot distance myself from Jacob because I see Jacob in me.

I am a sinner. And God's word tells me that every one of you are with me and with Jacob because we are sinners. None of us are righteous.

[ 60 : 56 ] But the question is, will we admit it? Jacob admitted his sin. God's told the Lord his name. And you know, the Lord's table is the place that we go to admit our sin. The Lord's table is not the place that we go to assert that we are better than other people.

sinner. The Lord's table is the place that we go to admit that we are sinners, that we are deceivers, that we are cheats, that we are liars, that we are sinners.

Sinners who have asked for the grace, the blessing, the forgiveness that Jesus has paid for, and that he promises to give to all those who ask.

Admission of sin. We hear it from Jacob. And the last thing is he receives the assurance of blessing. Then he, this is the Lord, said, Your name, verse 28, shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.

[ 62 : 29 ] Then Jacob asked him, Please tell me your name. But he said, Why is it you ask my name? And there he blessed them. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, For I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered.

The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. So Jacob, as we finish, he comes through this difficult, painful experience.

He comes through this dark night of the soul with the assurance, verse 29, of God's blessing. He comes through this difficult, painful experience with the assurance, verse 30, of the Lord's deliverance, salvation.

And he comes through this experience with a new name. No longer is he called Jacob, but he's given this new name, which is Israel, which means a God- mastered man, to use the definition that I think Campbell Morgan gives him.

And for us, if we admit our sin, like Jacob did, if we ask for blessing and for grace, like Jacob did, then we have the assurance of blessing, like Jacob had.

[ 64 : 15 ] And not only did Jacob have the assurance of blessing through the word that God spoke to him, but he had a reminder of that blessing each time he sat down to eat a meal.

Verse 32, therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

So for Jacob, and for all the people who followed Jacob in that family line, which gets wider and wider and wider all the way to here today, for Jacob and for all those who followed him and his family, at mealtime, as the sinew of the thigh was removed and not eaten, the people of God, that nation that was called Israel, were reminded of how God blessed Jacob and how God was blessing them through that sore touch to the socket of Jacob's hip.

God gave us to him. He's given us physical, visual, regular reminder of all that God had done for him to bring blessing.

Now, we don't do that anymore. We don't cut up our chicken and remove a sinew to remember this occasion here, because our faith is not in Jacob.

[ 65 : 58 ] our faith is in Jesus. He's the one Jacob is pointing us forward to. He is the one through whom the blessing would come.

And as we think about the prospect of next week, there is a meal that has been prepared for us. It's called the Lord's Supper.

And as we sit down to eat, we remember Jesus. We're not taken to Peniel, we're taken to Calvary. And we remember not a hip that was touched, but we remember a body that was struck. a body that was broken, blood that was shed.

We remember the pain that Jesus had to bear. We remember the fact that he not only suffered, but he died for us. To take away the curse of our sin, so that we can have the assurance of blessing if we believe in him.

[ 67 : 28 ] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you that you are the God of Jacob, and that you are our God.

We thank you for the reality, the gritty reality of this story, this historical account of how you worked in Jacob's life in a way that was uncomfortable, painful even, to bring him to that point where he would trust you and submit to you.

And we know that you are the God who still works in our lives, sometimes in ways that are difficult, because we are so like Jacob. we find it so hard to trust you through the darkness.

We find it so hard to submit to you. So often we live lives which are undisciplined, lives where we stamp our feet and want to go our own way.

And so we thank you that sometimes you take us to a place where, like it or not, we are found alone with God. Sometimes we thank you for even the assaults, the storms of our circumstances that take us to a place where we are hanging on to you and your promises.

[ 69 : 05 ] And we pray that with Jacob, even this morning, we would be found admitting our sin, admitting that we are who we are.

We are not righteous, but we are sinners. And we pray that we would, each one of us even now, be asking for the blessing and for the grace that you promise to all who simply come to you.

And we pray that having come to you, that we would know the assurance and the joy of the salvation, the deliverance, the blessing that is promised to all who are in Christ.

So help us to trust you, Lord Jesus. Work in us, Holy Spirit, to make us more like Jesus. And enable us, as we see the communion table coming close, to take our stand and to make that profession that we are yours, that we are with the God who is with us.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude from Mission Praise 4, 8 to Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee, because that's what God was doing in Jacob's life.

[ 70 : 33 ] He was working through this encounter to bring him near. And we pray that God will bring us near to him. Amen. Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee, nearer to thee,!

In knowing me across that raiseth me, still all my song would be nearer my God to thee, nearer thee, nearer to thee, nearer to thee.

Nearer to thee, nearer to thee. O, like the wanderer that's unpondent, darkness be over me, me, I rest rest a storm.

Yet in my dreams I be, nearer by nearer to thee, nearer to thee, nearer to thee, nearer to thee. to thee where let the way appear steps unto hell all the sanders be in mercy ever angels to back of thee nearer my call to thee nearer to thee nearer to thee and with thy way he blind with thy pain out of my stormy gleams let the light raise so guide my host to thee nearer thy name near near my heart to thee near to thee near to thee near to thee!

[ 74 : 06 ] or in one joyful day! leaving that sky sun moon and stars dawn upwards and might still all my songs shall be nearer my heart to thee nearer to thee nearer to thee nearer to thee now may the grace Lord Jesus the love father the fellowship of Holy Spirit be with us all now and always Amen