

14.9.25 pm

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Date: 14 September 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] Good evening, and one welcome to the service this evening. We're going to begin this time of worship, and we'll sing to God's praise from Psalm 116.
- ! Psalm 116, we'll sing through to verse 8 in the course of the service. We're just going to sing the first two stanzas of the psalm just now.
- I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear. Of death, the cords and sorrows that about me compassed round, the pains of hell took hold of me, a grief and trouble found.
- Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thy my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray. We're going to sing just the first two stanzas of Psalm 116 in Gaelic again.
- Remaining seated to sing, and after that, Callum will lead us in prayer in Gaelic, please. Let's cry. Thank you.
- [1 : 2 9] Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- [4 : 2 9] Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Amen.
- Amen. We'll sing again to God's praise this time from Mission Praise to 746. 746 in Mission Praise.
- What a friend we have in Jesus. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Amen.
- Amen. What a friend we love in Jesus All our sins and griefs to bear What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer Oh, our gifts we often forfeit Oh, what needless will remain Oh, because we do not guide Everything to God in prayer Are we trials and temptations?
- [7 : 5 4] Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged Take it to the Lord in prayer Can we find our friends so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?
- Jesus knows our heavy weakness Take it to the Lord in prayer Are we weak and deadly laden Comfort with our Lord of care Precious sinners still our refuge Take it to the Lord in prayer Do thy friends despise for safely Take it to the Lord in prayer In his arms he'll take and cheer thee Thou wilt find our sorrows there If you could turn please in your Bibles

To Genesis chapter 32 Genesis 32 Good to see a lot of young people here tonight I think the last time you were all here For a big YF We were in the last installment Of the story of Jacob So we're continuing in the story of Jacob Tonight And we have reached chapter 32 Where we see Jacob And he has left Or he is leaving In transit The place that he'd been for the last 20 years With his father-in-law Laban Who hadn't been the kindest to him And he's heading now In response to God's call Back to the place that he would call home So Genesis 32 And we'll read from verse 1 This is God's word Jacob went on his way And the angels of God met him

And when Jacob saw them He said This is God's camp So he called the name of that place Mahan-aim And Jacob sent messengers before him To Esau his brother In the land of Seir The country of Edom Instructing them Thus You shall say to my lord Esau Thus says your servant Jacob I have sojourned with Laban And stayed until now I have oxen Donkeys Flocks Male servants And female servants I have sent to tell my lord In order that I may find favor In your sight And the messengers returned to Jacob Saying We came to your brother Esau And he is coming to meet you And there are 400 men With him When Jacob Then Jacob was greatly afraid And distressed He divided the people Who were with him And the flocks and herds And camels Into two camps Thinking If Esau comes to the one camp And attacks it Then the camp that is left Will escape And Jacob said

O God Of my father Abraham And God Of my father Isaac O Lord Who said to me Return to your country And to your kindred That I may do you good I am not worthy Of the least of all The deeds Of steadfast love And all the faithfulness That you have shown To your servant For with my Only my staff I crossed this Jordan And I have become Two camps Please deliver me From the hand of my brother From the hand of Esau For I fear him That he may come And attack me The mothers With the children But you said I will surely do you good And make your offspring As the sand of the sea Which cannot be numbered For multitude So he stayed there That night And from what He had with him He took a present For his brother Esau Two hundred female goats And twenty male goats Two hundred ewes And twenty rams Thirty milking camels

[12 : 35] And their calves Forty cows And ten bulls Twenty female donkeys And ten male donkeys These he handed over To his servants Every drove by itself And said to his servants Pass on ahead of me And put a space Between drove and drove He instructed the first When Esau my brother Meets you And asks you To whom do you belong Where are you going And whose are these Ahead of you Then you shall say They belong to your servant Jacob They are a present Sent to my lord Esau And moreover He is behind us He likewise instructed The second And the third And all who followed The droves You shall say The same thing to Esau When you find him And you shall say Moreover your servant Jacob is behind us But he thought I may appease him With the present That goes ahead of me And afterward I shall see his face Perhaps he will accept me So the present Passed on ahead of him And he himself Stayed that night

In the camp The same night He 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 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 And he said to him What is your name?

And 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 them 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 May God bless That reading Of his word To us We'll sing again To God's praise From Psalm 116 And we'll sing From where we left off In the psalm We'll sing from verse 4 Down to verse 8 Four stanzas Of the psalm Upon the name of God The Lord Then did I call and say Deliver thy my soul O Lord I do thee humbly pray God merciful And righteous As ye gracious Is our Lord God saves the meek

I was brought Although he did me help before Down to the end Of verse 8 We'll sing To God's praise Upon the name Of God the Lord Then did I call and say Deliver thou my soul O Lord I do thee humbly pray God merciful And righteous God saves the meek I was brought

[16 : 35] Lord He did me help God saves the meek I was brought Lord He did me help Lord Lord The miracle miracle miracle

It's my morning eyes from tears, my feet from falling free.

Well, as we turn back to Genesis 32, let's pray and ask for God's help. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege, for the gift that we have of prayer.

We thank you as we sang that we have a friend in Jesus and it's in Jesus' name that we pray, the one who is more than a friend, the one who is our Saviour, God the Son, Emmanuel, God with us.

We thank you, Father, that we can come to you as our Father because of all that Jesus has done on our behalf. And we ask now that as we come in prayer, that you would hear us and that as we open your Word, that you would help us to understand.

[19 : 11] Holy Spirit, we pray that you would apply this to our lives and that we would be given faith, that we may not just be hearers of the Word, but that we may believe and we may do what you are calling us to do.

So we look to you and ask that you would help us in speaking and listening and responding and our going out from this place, that you would help us and that all that we do would lift up the name of Jesus.

We pray for those who meet as we do in different places. We think of Richard tonight as he preaches in the High Free in Stornoway. We ask, Lord, that you would help him, that he would know your presence, your peace, that you would speak powerfully through him.

And for all others who preach and who gather as we do just now, different denominations and different locations, congregations that are precious to us, people that come into our minds, we pray that whatever the gospel is preached, Lord God, that you would be adding your blessing, Lord Jesus, that you would build your church as you have promised.

We pray for the young ones here tonight as well. We thank you for so many of them. We thank you for the big YF that's organised in Stornoway and we pray for safety for them as they travel there and back.

[20 : 39] And we pray that as they come under the word of God, that they and we would remember our creator in the days of our youth and from the days of our youth, that we would remember that we have a creator, the one who made us, one who cares for us, one who seeks us and who saves us.

So be at work, Lord, we pray, in each of our lives, young and old, those present, those who may watch at a distance, who may have a desire to be here, but who can't be just now.

We thank you for them as they listen and watch in their own homes. Bless them, we pray. And for any who may have opportunity but who have no desire, we ask that you would move and work in their hearts.

We pray for them, not in a way that is judgmental because we know that none of us seek God without the help of the Holy Spirit. We were in that place ourselves where we had no desire for the things of God, but you're the one who awakens our souls.

And so we pray, where there is a deadness or a coldness, that you would bring life and that you would bring the warmth of your spirit.

[21 : 59] And we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. What I'd like to do in the time that we have this evening is just continue in the Jacob story.

We're going through a story, a narrative that has been told of the life of Jacob at this point in Genesis. We're in Genesis chapter 32.

We're not going to get all the way through it tonight. We've read it, but we'll reserve the last part for another date. But I want to just go through the first, probably two-thirds of the chapter and just make some comments as we go.

And the first thing that we see as we come to Genesis 32 is we see Jacob and he's on the move. He's not stationary.

He's not sitting at home with his feet up. He's on the move. He is making progress. The first four, five words in the chapter say that Jacob went on his way.

[23 : 08] Now, for those of us who are reading this and maybe haven't been in this book for a wee while, we might be wondering, where is he on his way from and to? Rewind to chapter 31 and at verse 3 and we see and we hear in that verse that God had told Jacob, he had called Jacob to return to the land of his fathers and kindred.

So Jacob, who has been away from home for a long time, under the control, the heavy control of his father-in-law Laban, Jacob, he hears the call of God to return to the place that was his home.

And Jacob, having heard the call of God, he discusses it with his family. He puts it on the family WhatsApp group chat.

He calls a family meeting. He says, this is what God is calling me to do. And as a family, they decide that they are going to listen and respond in obedience and faith to the call of God.

And so they set off and we see Jacob here, he's on his way. There's progress. God has called Jacob and he is progressing in accordance in the direction of that call.

[24 : 34] And it wasn't easy because, you know, we can read back into Genesis 31 and we can see that Jacob's father-in-law did everything possible that he could to stop him from going, but God had called him.

And so Jacob, he is on his way. He's following the Lord that is progress. question and application.

All I'm going to do tonight is give you a few words and draw out some devotional application. Question and application for me and for you is, are we still on the way?

Are we still following the Lord? If we were to look back through Jacob's story, there is things that happened in Jacob's experience, encounters with God that he could tell amazing tales about.

Jacob could tell stories about the things that God had done in his experience in the past. And all these things are amazing to hear.

[25 : 53] And maybe some of us here tonight, we could, if we were asked to give testimony, we might speak about the things that God has done in our past experience, things that he has done at key points in our lives.

And all these things are good to remember and to share. But the question I want us to think about at the moment is, what is God doing in the present?

What is God doing? What is God saying in our lives right now? Are we still going on with the Lord?

Are we still on the way with the Lord? Are we still following him closely? Is there progress year on year, as Jesus calls us to walk with him?

First point, progress. Jacob, he went on his way. We see the movement, we see the progress. Second point is the presence, the presence of God specifically.

[26 : 59] Verse 1, Jacob, he went on his way, and the angels of God met him, and when Jacob saw them, he said, this is God's camp. So he called the name of that place Mahanim, which means two camps.

And again, if we just rewind for a moment to chapter 31 and verse 3, we can see in that verse that God calls Jacob to return, but God promises, as he calls him, I will be with you.

He says, return to the land of your fathers and your kindred, leave Laban, leave the place that you've been all this time, return to that land that I'm calling you to go to, and don't worry, Jacob, I will be with you.

And so here, as Jacob went on his way, as Jacob goes on God's way, the angels of God met him. Hale, the commentator, says, as Jacob drew near the promised land of Canaan, he saw angels of God coming to meet him, and the sight reassured Jacob that God was indeed with him.

So Jacob, in this amazing scene that's painted for us, he is so aware of the presence of God, the presence of the messengers, the angels of God, with him, just as God had promised.

[28 : 38] lost. But what I want us to notice is that the angels of God didn't meet with Jacob until he went on the way.

After God calls Jacob, Jacob doesn't stay at home with his feet up and wait for this host of angels to come, to help him pack his bags and help him move off.

No, Jacob, he has to set off in obedience to God's call before the angels of God meet him, and before he becomes aware of the reassuring presence of God.

So to put it simply, Jacob, he steps out in faith, and God meets him. And that's a lesson for us to take in.

Because when God calls us to do something, it's as we obey him that he meets with us and helps us do the thing that he's calling us to do.

[29 : 59] For some people in this room, I'm quite sure that God is calling you to trust him, to begin to follow Jesus.

And maybe you're sitting here tonight as you've sat here many other nights thinking, it's just too hard. In a way, I want to be a Christian, but it's just too hard. My friends might laugh at me, my work colleagues might not take me as seriously as they do just now, people might think I'm weird.

I can't do it. I don't have the strength to do this. But as you take the step in following Jesus, God will be with you.

He will help you on the first step and every step. There's maybe others here this evening, and already you're following Jesus, but you're following Jesus us secretly.

And maybe recently, or maybe over many years, God has been calling you to step out of the shadows into the light, to move from silence to profession of faith.

[31 : 19] And it seems terrifying. It just seems too much. much. But the promise of God is that as you and I take that step in obedience, God will be with us, and he will give us the courage to stand for him.

And even as we think just now in our own congregation, as some prepare for ministry, some here in the UK, some further afield, abroad, there can be a sense of fear, as we're called, to step out, to serve the Lord.

But when we are responding to God's call to go, we have the assurance that he will be with us, his presence will be with us wherever we go, no matter whether it's far away on some specific mission, or whether it's very close by, speaking for Jesus to the people he's put around us.

As we minister in obedience to his call, he promises his presence will be with us. So just as Jacob had the assurance of the presence of God with him, we have the assurance of the presence of God.

Jacob had angels. We actually have much better than angels. We have the words of Jesus, who said in Matthew 28, verse 20, Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

[33 : 11] So we see progress. As Jacob, he's on the move, he's on the way. We see that the presence of God is with Jacob as he responds to the call of God.

The third thing we see here, not everybody would agree with us, but my own opinion is that we can see that Jacob is penitent. Verse 3 to verse 5, Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau.

Remember, Esau is his brother that he's at war with, this brother that he has double crossed, this brother that wanted to kill him. And now Jacob, he's heading back home, but his brother is still at home.

He's terrified about what kind of reception he may receive as he meets his brother. So Jacob sent messengers! before him to Esau, his brother, in the land of Seir, in the country of Edom, instructing them, thus you shall say to my lord Esau, thus says your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now.

I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, female servants, I have sent to tell my lord in order that I may find favor in your sight.

[34 : 22] So Jacob, as we listen to what he says and as we watch what he's doing, I think there are signs here that he is penitent. What does it mean to be penitent? Well, it's just another way of saying that we are repenting.

What does mean to repent? It means to turn away from sin, turn away from self, turn to the lord. And as we look in on Jacob here, I think there are signs of repentance, there are signs in Jacob's life and his approach and his language that would indicate that God is working on him, that he's changing.

if we think about the old Jacob, the double crosser, the deceiver, the old Jacob was always on the take.

He was always taking as much as he could for himself from his brother. But here, Jacob, he's offering gifts, not taking, he's offering gifts to his brother.

the old Jacob's always trying to do deals. He's always ducking and diving. He's always trading and negotiating.

[35 : 39] But here, Jacob, as he comes to approach his brother, he's asking for grace. He's asking for favor in your sight, verse 5.

The old Jacob was trying to always lord over his brother. He's always trying to control his brother. He's always trying to get one over his brother.

But here, Jacob, he calls Esau, my lord. And he calls himself your servant, Jacob.

So there's signs here, I think, that Jacob is penitent. The passage, to me, sounds a little bit like the parable of the prodigal son that we heard a little about this morning.

Jacob sounds a little bit like the prodigal son who's returning to his father. He's returning home. And he's different. So as Jacob here heads back to the land of his fathers and kindred, Jacob appears to be a different man.

[36 : 55] There's signs of repentance and grace in Jacob's approach and in Jacob's life. And the question for you and I to think about is as we open God's word and we look into it, are we seeing a reflection of our own hearts?

Is there repentance? Are we those who are repenting daily? Are there signs of grace in our lives?

are we day by day repenting of our sin? And you have your sins that you struggle with, just as I have my sins that I struggle with.

We can name them, we can think of them. Are we day by day, hour by hour, turning away from these sins?

Turning away from that tendency that we have to just make the whole world about ourselves? Are we turning to the Lord?

[38 : 19] Or another way of putting it maybe is as God the Holy Spirit works in us if we are Christians, are we looking less like our own old sinful selves?

And are we looking more and more like Jesus? Because that's God's design. He saves us in order to sanctify us, and to be sanctified means that we're being made day by day, hour by hour, week by week, month by month, year by year, more and more like Jesus, and less and less like David.

Luther said, when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent, he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.

So this is not something that we do at the point of entry into the Christian lives. We have to repent and believe in order to be saved, but day by day we have to keep on repenting.

I think we see something of a penitent spirit in Jacob as he comes to the land that God was calling him to return to. Point number four, problems.

[39 : 45] And I've got a question mark at the end of that. Problems, question mark. Verse six, as we just carry on through the text. And the messengers return to Jacob.

So Jacob, remember he says, he sends these messengers out ahead of him. And the messengers returned to Jacob saying, we came to your brother Esau and he's coming to meet you and there's 400 men with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him and the flocks and herds and camels into two camps, thinking if Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.

So, what's going on here? the messengers of Jacob, they're sent out to survey what's going on up ahead. And as they return with news for Jacob, the news doesn't sound very good.

They say to Jacob, well, Esau is coming to meet you. I know you're heading home, but Esau's actually on the road, he's coming to meet you. And Jacob probably thought, well, that's excellent news. And then the messengers say, well, not so fast.

[40 : 57] It's not only Esau, he's got 400 men with him. And 400 men sounds kind of like an army. So, what Jacob hears is, my brother is coming, and he's brought an army with him.

And so, Jacob hits the panic button. And he does a very Jacob-like thing. He separates into two camps, so that if there's an attack from Esau, he won't lose everything.

He'll have at least half of his stuff left. One commentator even says, how like us Jacob was. He assumed the worst.

So, he gets the news. Esau's coming, 400 men with him. And Jacob says, this is a huge problem. That's his assumption.

But in reality, it wasn't a problem. See, Jacob reads into providence what actually wasn't there. Jacob's getting stressed, distressed, greatly afraid for no reason.

[42 : 13] Because what he assumes to be an army, that's coming with Esau, it was actually a welcoming party. So, all that worrying and all that stress and all that fretting is for nothing.

And Jacob is just so like you and me in this situation. fear. Because how often are you and I found stressing about things that we've got no reason to stress about?

How often, like Jacob, are we worrying about things that might not ever happen? How often, like Jacob, do we see things as huge problems when actually there is no problem?

What does Jesus say in Matthew 6? He says, Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

[43 : 37] Can any one of you, says Jesus, can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life? So Jacob, he sees what he thinks are problems.

Reality, they weren't. So what does Jacob do next? Point number five, he prays. Prayer. We sang just a few moments ago, Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

And often the reality is, it's fear that drives us to pray. One of the triggers, and this is not a bad thing, this is a right thing, one of the triggers that causes us to pray, is stress and anxiety.

And it's certainly that way for Jacob. He's stressed, he's anxious, he's worried, he's seeing problems, prayers. And so he prays. This is actually the first time that we read in Jacob's life that he prays.

It's the first time in Genesis that we read that Jacob prays at all. And yet it's also the longest prayer that we have in the book of Genesis. So his first prayer is a long one.

[45 : 10] We used to be the commentator says, Jacob's prayer is one of the great prayers recorded in Scripture, and yet it was prayed by a man whose faith was very weak.

So Jacob prays, and the question for us to think about for a moment is just, how does Jacob pray? Just take a little look at the prayer. Well, Jacob prays according to the word and the will of God.

Verse 9. Just step through the prayer with me. Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, return to your country and to your kindred so that I may do you good.

So Jacob, as he prays, he's praying to the God whom he knows, and he's praying in accordance with the word that God has given to him.

He's anchoring his prayer right from the beginning in what God has said to him. O Lord, who said to me, return to your country and to your kindred that I may do you good. He's on the road, he's stressed out, he's seen problems, he's worried, but he says to God, I'm doing what you told me to do.

[46 : 36] Help me. And Jacob, as he prays, he prays in humility, he's seeking the grace of God. Look at verse 10, he says, I'm not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant.

There's no pride in Jacob as he prays. He doesn't say, give me what I deserve. He says, I don't deserve anything. Give me grace. Help me. And Jacob, as he prays, he prays with thankfulness and he prays with a spirit of worship.

He's remembering everything that the Lord has done for and given to him. He says in verse 10, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, now I have become two camps.

All these people, all these animals, livestock, stuff that he has, he says, all this that I have, God, you gave it to me. I'm thankful for this. And then Jacob, he prays specifically.

We're not specific enough, I think, in our prayers very often. We're so general. Jacob prays specifically. He asks the Lord to deliver him from trouble.

[47 : 50] Verse 11, he says, please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers and the children. He's specific, and he's saying, help me, deliver me, save me.

And Jacob, as he prays, he prays believing that God will do what he said he'll do. Verse 12, Jacob says, but you said, do we ever pray like this?

Do we ever say to God, I think Jeremy prayed this way this morning? To ever pray saying to God, you said, you promised. So, I'm praying in accordance with your promise, I'm praying, believing that you will do what you said.

Because that's how Jacob prays, but you said, I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

And so, as Jacob looks to the God that he trusts, as Jacob remembers the promises that God has made, as Jacob believes in the power of God, as he comes with that humble spirit seeking the grace of God, he prays.

[49 : 16] And this is probably the greatest indication that Jacob is spiritually alive. He prays. Andrew Murray says, prayer is the pulse of the spiritual life.

And so, Jacob prays. And if we are Christians, we will pray. And if we are a church that is alive, we will pray.

If we are a church that is healthy, that will be indicated and seen not in the number of clubs that we put on, or in the number of activities that are on our intimation sheet.

The measure of our spiritual health will be seen in the number of people who need to pray. Prayer.

The next thing we see here on Jacob's part is there's practical action. You can read about it in verse 13 to verse 21. I'm not going to read it again.

[50 : 38] Time is gone. But we can see there in that section that Jacob having prayed prayed. He now does something.

He doesn't pray and do nothing. He doesn't pray and then just sit down and wait for something to happen. He prays, but then he makes some practical moves as he approaches his brother Esau.

One commentator, Hale, says, praying doesn't remove the need for practical action. Jacob devised a plan to pacify his brother Esau. He sent ahead carefully spaced groups of different animals as gifts for Esau so that Esau would encounter these groups of animals one by one and gradually be won over.

So he prays, but he does something sensible. And some commentators say, well, this is just clearly an indication that Jacob is unbelieving. He's got no faith. I'm not convinced that's the case at all.

I think he prays believing and then he does something aligned with his prayer. Eve's in the commentator, says, is it necessarily a sign of weak faith to take what measures we can to put things right?

[51 : 53] God uses our plans as well as our prayers in fulfilling his great purposes. See, prayer and practical action, they go together. We often pray for those who are sick to be healed.

We are praying presently for those who are sick to be healed. But we also encourage them to take the treatment, to take the medicine that they're offered.

Prayer, practical action. We pray for revival. But as we pray for revival, we make every effort to tell people about Jesus.

Jesus. our mission partners, we pray for them as they go out on mission, but we encourage them to plan and prepare practically as they go out.

prayer. So we see prayer, practical action, and then the last thing we see in this chapter is prayer.

[53 : 11] We're back to prayer again. And that's where the chapter ends. Verses 22 to verse 32, Jacob is wrestling with God in prayer.

prayer. And that's probably the best way to describe prayer. It's not easy.

It's a wrestle. It's not easy to pray when this thing's vibrating and popping every five minutes. It's not easy to pray when you see a pile of papers on your desk and you know it's got to be dealt with.

It's not easy to pray when the dog's barking downstairs and the children are kicking off. It's not easy to pray when you see how long the grass is in the garden. It's not easy to pray when there's so many distractions in our lives.

It's a wrestle. And so Jacob wrestles through the night, and as he does so, blessing comes, just as God promised it would.

[54 : 24] And there's a whole lot in this section which I'm not going to touch tonight. We'll come back to this in a week or two. But I want to finish tonight just with that encouragement to be people who pray.

As we heard this morning, the God of the Old Testament, the God of Jacob, is a God who loves to bless.

And that blessing was paid for by Jesus on the cross. But that blessing is given to all who come to God in prayer and who ask, as Jacob did.

So let's be encouraged to be people of prayer. Let's pray just now. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the life of Jacob.

We thank you for this warts and all account of every scene and every situation, every success, every failure, every struggle, every mistake.

[55 : 40] we thank you that you were working in his life. We thank you that you're the God who still works in our lives. And we thank you that you're the God who calls us and who encourages us to pray.

So help us to pray, to wrestle in prayer, to persevere in prayer. And we ask that as we pray, in Jesus' name, seeking the grace of Jesus, believing in the promises of Jesus, that you would hear our prayers and that you would bless us.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude the hymn on the screen. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Lord, O my soul, O my soul, I worship this holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship your holy name.

The sun comes up, this new day dawned, it's time to sing your song again.

[57 : 14] Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me, let me be singing when the evening comes.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship his holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul, I worship your holy name.

The song that has moved in the way, your name is sweet and your heart is kind.

For all your goodness I will keep on singing. Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

[58 : 19] Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul, worship his holy name.

sing like never before, O my soul, I worship your holy name.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, heal us all now and forever more. Amen. Amen. Amen.