I Am Jacob

Genesis 32:24-28  And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

The crisis
• Our story, tonight, starts with a crisis.
  o Isn’t it amazing how often life changing moments occur in the middle of some crisis in our lives?
  o It is rare that we encounter the dramatic life-altering power of God, in those times when everything is going our way and life is smooth sailing.
  o Is that because God doesn’t want to bless us in those times?
    ▪ No. It is simply because of basic human nature.
  o It often takes a crisis to cause us to become aware of the fact that we need a move of God in our lives.

• It was a crisis that drove Jacob to the pivotal moment in our text.
  o He was in a tight spot.
    ▪ In front of him was Esau
      • who, for all Jacob knew, was bringing his army out to exact revenge on him.
    ▪ Jacob has been on the run from Esau for some time now
      • and he knows that a reunion with Esau
      • is not likely to end well for him.
  o But he couldn’t turn around and go back
    ▪ because behind him was Laban,
      • who was also angry with Jacob
      • and was pursuing him with revenge on his mind.
• No matter where Jacob goes from here, he’s going into trouble.
  o Either Esau before him,
    ▪ or Laban behind him,
      • no matter what he does, he is stuck.
        o He is afraid.
        o And he is out of options.
• That’s when he did what most of us will do in that kind of place...
  o He prayed.
• That’s the reason why blessing often comes in the midst of crisis,
I Am Jacob

because crisis often drives us to God.

• What Jacob really needed that night at Penuel
  o was not just an answer to his dilemmas.
    ▪ He needed an encounter with God.
  o When Jacob started praying that night,
    ▪ he didn’t even know what he really needed,
      ▪ he thought he needed God to make a way
        • for him to escape from Esau and Laban,
    o but what he really needed
      ▪ was for God to make a way
        • for him to escape who he was.
  o That’s often what happens
    ▪ when God engineers a crisis in our life
      ▪ to bring us to him.
    ▪ We start out praying for the need we can see and understand
      ▪ but God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy,
        • begins to move in the needs that we couldn’t even see
          for ourselves.
    ▪ We become so fixated on the temporal
      ▪ that we completely miss the eternal sometimes.

• When God starts making a way out of no way,
  o he starts with the eternal and works his way to the temporal.
• So God puts Jacob in a place
  o where he is out of options,
    ▪ frustrated,
    ▪ and afraid
      • because God is getting ready to do
        • a much greater work in Jacob’s life
          o than Jacob ever imagined.

The encounter
• The crisis led Jacob to an encounter with God.
  o As night fell, Jacob sent his family away,
    ▪ probably so that, if Esau found him overnight,
    ▪ his family wouldn’t have to perish with him.
  o However, it was not Esau who hunted him down that night, it was God.
    ▪ Jacob was left alone and wrestled all night long with a man.
  o Let me clarify one thing right away.
    ▪ In verse 30 Jacob says, “I have seen God face to face.”
      ▪ The man that Jacob wrestled with that night was God himself!
  o I don’t know if Jacob realized that at the beginning
but Jacob clearly recognized that this supernatural wrestling match
- was incredibly important to more than just his physical well being.

- Somewhere in the course of that epic wrestling match,
  - the story became about so much more
    - than just a way of escape from his present dilemma.
  - Jacob began to realize he was wrestling for something so much more important.
    - As that began to dawn on him, he wrestled all the harder.
      - He struggled with God, with all that he had.
      - He refused to let go.
  - Something in him sensed the presence of God in that place
    - and he knew that, come what may,
      - he had to hang on to this for dear life.
  - Some innate sense told him, this was a monumental moment.
    - He could not afford to miss this!
  - So Jacob wrestled with God, through that long dark night,
    - all the way to the breaking of the new day.
  - Somewhere in the midst of that contest,
    - Jacob realized that he was wrestling
      - for something of eternal value in his life.

- Perhaps it was as the darkness of night
  - began to give way to the brilliant hues of morning
    - that Jacob began to realize
    - that he was wrestling for a new beginning,
      - a new life,
      - a new purpose,
      - a new future.
- His whole life was characterized by trouble and heartache
  - and somewhere in the course of that night
    - Jacob realized that this was his chance to start all over!
- Just like a new day was dawning
  - and the darkness of night was fading,
    - this moment in Jacob’s life
      - had all the potential of obtaining
      - a life changing blessing from God.
- A brand new day was dawning in his life.
  - So he held on with all he had.
    - Jacob refused to let go of that moment
      - until he got what he needed from God.
• That’s the kind of spirit that it takes to have a life-changing encounter with God.
  o You can’t approach him with a nonchalant, take it or leave it, kind of approach.
    ▪ You have to realize how desperately you need God.
• That’s when he intervenes
  o and opens the fountains of heaven
    ▪ to pour out a blessing that you cannot contain.
• You do realize that God could have ended the encounter any time he wanted.
  o All he had to do was “touch” Jacob’s hip and he was crippled for the rest of his life.
    ▪ So the fact that Jacob wrestled with God all night long
      • is not indicative of the idea that Jacob was somehow a match for God.
• It is indicative of the fact that it took the whole night for Jacob to realize what it was that he really needed from God!
  o God wrestles with him until Jacob finally begins to glimpse why God has driven him to this crisis and this encounter at this time in his life.
    ▪ Listen, before they ever started wrestling, God knew that this was about a changed life.
    ▪ But it took Jacob all night long to come to that conclusion.

The Question
• The crisis led to an encounter and the encounter led to a question.
  o The encounter with God reaches its culmination at the point when God points to the breaking day and says, let me go!
  o But Jacob persists and says,
    ▪ I will not let you go until you bless me.
  o Jacob senses that the moment is passing and he desperately needs a blessing from God!
    ▪ I will not stop,
    ▪ I will not let go,
    ▪ I will not let this moment escape me!
    ▪ I must be blessed!
• God responds to the heart-felt plea of Jacob’s very soul with a question.
  o The question is the pivotal moment in the story.
    ▪ God said: What is your name?
  o That’s the question that strikes to the core of the issue.
• Jacob’s identity was wrapped up in his name.
  o In that day and age, the name was incredibly important,
    ▪ it identified the character of a person.
• A name was more than just the handle that people called you by.
  o A name was a statement of identity.
Who and what you are is, in a biblical sense, wrapped up in your name.

- Over and over again in scripture we find the importance of names.
  - Individuals actually lived out the meaning of their names
    - a name change was an extraordinary event
      - because it accompanied a change of character,
        - a change of identity
        - and ultimately a change of direction.

- Who Jacob was, was bound to his name.
  - He and Esau were twins.
    - When they were born, Esau was born first.
  - But from the very beginning,
    - Jacob was reaching forward,
      - trying to take that heritage from his brother.
  - When Esau was taken from the womb,
    - Jacob’s hand was wrapped around his brother’s ankle.
  - The younger brother was already trying to displace the older brother
    - so his parents named him Jacob.
  - The name means that he is a supplanter or a usurper.
    - From the start, Jacob lived up to his name.
      - As a young man he coerced his brother into selling him his birthright,
        - then a little later, as their father lay on his deathbed,
          - with the help of his mother,
        - he actually stole both the birthright and the blessing that was intended for Esau.
  - After he ran for his life, his relationship with Laban, his father in law, was also marked by deception.
    - Jacob was exactly what his name declared him to be.
      - He was a cheater.
      - A swindler.
      - A liar.
      - A fraud.
  - And before God would bless him,
    - he first asked Jacob, what is your name?

The Change

- The crisis leads to an encounter and the encounter culminates in a question
  - but it is answer to the question that opens the way for a change.
- Before God blessed him,
  - before God forever changed the course of his life,
    - first God required Jacob to come to terms with himself.

- Jacob had to tell God his name.
I Am Jacob

- He had to say I am Jacob.
- As he stood face to face with God,
  - Jacob had to come face to face with himself.
    - He had to say: I am Jacob.
    - I am the one that stole the birthright.
    - This is who I am.
    - I am a liar.
    - I am a cheater.
    - I am a usurper.
    - **I am Jacob.**

- This was the prerequisite to the blessing.
  - **Before he could embrace God’s promise for his life**
    - he first had to come to grips with himself.
  - He had to come to the place
    - where he confessed his faults.
  - He had to answer the question:
    - What is your name.
  - He had to confront the truth of who he was:
    - I am Jacob!

- It was only then that God moved in his life
  - and altered his future,
    - forever changing his name.
- Once Jacob came to terms with himself,
  - God changed his identity forever.
- His name would no longer be Jacob,
  - from that day forward he would be Israel
    - the prince who found favor with God.
- On that fateful day when he looked the Lord in the face
  - and admitted, I'm a cheater, I'm a deceiver, I am Jacob,
    - his life was forever changed.
- That moment of self-reflection was the prerequisite to the blessing.

**What Is Your Name?**
- It is the first Sunday of a new year and I believe that God is asking us a question.
  - Pentecostals of Lake City, can you be honest with yourself tonight?
    - Can you be honest with God?
      - What is your name?
      - Who are you?
    - When you get past the façade.
      - When you penetrate the false exterior that everyone else sees.
• What is your name?

- The wonderful thing about a brand new year
  - is that it appeals to some innate part of us
    - that is genuinely hungry for a change.
- Something about the New Year causes us to consider ourselves,
  - to consider our lives.
    - To consider where we are
      - and what we are,
      - and who we are.
    - And to hope for a change.
- I believe that, on this first Sunday of a new year,
  - God is calling us to be honest with ourselves.
    - There are some bad habits in our lives
      - that we need to break away from.
    - There are some bad choices
      - that we need to make right.
    - There are some faults and failures in our lives
      - that we desperately need to correct.
- I wonder what would happen this evening,
  - if you took the time
    - to honestly evaluate your walk with God,
      - To answer the question,
        - What is your name?
- What kind of shortcomings would you have to come to grips with?
  - I am Jacob.
    - I don’t pray like I should.
    - I don’t read the bible like I should.
    - I’m not as faithful as I should be.
    - It’s been years since I taught a home bible study.
      - I’ve almost forgotten what its like to lead someone to the cross.
- We desperately need to examine ourselves tonight.
  - We need to reflect upon our lives.
    - We’ve allowed the trivial things in this life
      - to distract us from those things
        - that have eternal importance.
- That’s what I love about a New Year.
  - It puts us a place like Jacob was on that night
    - where we become more aware
    - of the need for a change.
- The need to get some things right this year
  - that we didn’t do so well last year.
- That’s the kind of reflection
  - that is the prerequisite for a life altering encounter with God.

**Before we can embrace a better future,**
we must first lay our past to rest
- We must first stand before God
  - and come to terms with ourselves.
- We must be able to take a hard look at ourselves and say:
  - I am Jacob!

A New Year, A Better Year
- I truly believe that God has better things in store for us.
  - I truly believe that God
    - has a great revival waiting for us
      - in the coming year.
  - I believe that we are about to walk
    - into the greatest blessing of God that we have ever encountered as a church.
- But I also believe that,
  - before any of that can come to pass,
    - you and I have to come into the presence of God
      - and honestly search our hearts.
  - That is the prerequisite to the blessing.
- We have to be honest with ourselves before God
  - and recognize that there are areas in our lives
    - where we need to improve.
- There is no other way to transition
  - from where we are to where we long to be.
  - Jacob can’t become Israel
    - until he first recognizes that He is Jacob.
  - The only way that we can become the church
    - that God has called us to be
      - is if we realize that we need
        - a personal change in our lives.
  - We must hunger for a change in ourselves
    - before we will ever see a change in this church!
- That’s why the first step in salvation, beyond faith, is repentance.
  - Because before old things can be made new,
    - you have to come to the place
      - where you recognize that the old things need to be changed.
    - You have to come to terms with yourself!
  - Repentance is about more than just saying I’m sorry.
    - Repentance is about change.
• It is about a complete change of direction.
  ▪ Sorrow over my failures isn’t all that is necessary.
• Repentance resolves to change.
  o Repentance says:
    ▪ I will walk in a new direction!
• That is what was so important about that night in Jacob’s life.
  o He already knew that he was Jacob.
  o But that night he was sick of being Jacob.
    ▪ He wanted a name change.
    ▪ He wanted things to be different.
  o And before things could forever be changed in his life
    ▪ He had to first come to grips with himself
      • I AM JACOB!
  o Before God make you into what he wants you to be
    ▪ you have to come to that same place.
    ▪ You have to come to grips with yourself.
  o You have to stand in the presence of God and say
    ▪ I am Jacob, and I don’t want stay this way.
      • I’m a liar, a cheater, a sinner.
        o I’ve failed and I’ve fallen.
  o I’ve gone places I shouldn’t go
    ▪ and done things I shouldn’t have done.
      • AND I DESIRE A CHANGE IN MY LIFE
• They tell me that every mighty revival
  o is first preceded by earnest repentance.
• That every move of God
  o is first preceded by people
    ▪ who fall on their faces in the presence of God
      • and come to the realization,
        o I am Jacob!
• I’m hungry for a move of God in our church.
  o I’m hungry for a revival in our city.
• Which is why I feel
  o that it is incredibly necessary
    ▪ that we come to a place of personal reflection
      • and prayerfully consider ourselves!
• It is time to recognize our shortcomings
  o and to realize that we don’t have to stay that way.
    ▪ Jacob doesn’t have to be Jacob forever.
      • His life can be changed
        o in the presence of God.
But first he has to realize that he needs the change.
  ▪ First he has to come to terms with who he is!
    • I am Jacob!

Tonight we must come to terms with who we are.
  o Is this really all you want?
    ▪ Is this really where you want to live your life?
      • Are satisfied with where you are spiritually?
      • Are you satisfied with where your walk with God is?
  o If not this is your night.
    • This is the time for a change.
  o But first you have to come to terms with yourself.
    ▪ God is waiting for you to lift your voice to heaven
    ▪ and answer the question:
      • What is your name?
    • I am Jacob!
      o But I don’t want to stay this way!

Close
  • Tonight, we aren’t just standing on the precipice of a new year.
    o We are standing on the brink of a new day.
  • I want to ask you tonight, as a church to examine yourself.
    o To find a place of prayer and honestly examine your life.
    ▪ This is the prerequisite to the blessing.
    o To come humbly before God
    ▪ with the simple declaration,
      • I am Jacob.
        o Own it.
        o Own your faults and failure.
        o Own your shortcomings.
      • And determine to put them under the blood today!
  • We need a change.
    o We need an encounter with God that forever changes our direction.
      ▪ We’ve been stuck in a rut for too long.
    o But, before there can be a change,
      ▪ we must first identify the things that must change.
      • That is uncomfortable territory for us but it is necessary.
  •
  • As you reflect upon your life
    o I want to encourage you to join with me
      ▪ and lets make some commitments for the new year.
    •
  • Lets commit to reaching our city
    o with the gospel message.
•
• Lets commit to sharing this wonderful grace
  o with someone else.
•
• Lets commit to walk closer to God
  o than ever before.
•
• Lets commit to having personal prayer
  o and study time
    ▪ more faithfully than ever before.
•
• Lets commit to do our part
  o and allow God to do his part.
•
  o Let us resolve to be a book of Acts church.
  o
  o Let us resolve to reap an end-time revival.
  o
  o Let us resolve to let God have his way in our lives!
  o
  o Let us resolve to be the church that he has called us to be.
  o
  o Let us resolve to have revival like never before in 2015.
  o
  o Let us resolve that we will not be Jacob for another year!
    ▪ We MUST change!