Lesson: Jacob Wrestles with God « Children’s Bible School lessons

for Saturday, 27 November 2010

Volunteers: Justin, Josie, Maple, plus Paul

Driver: Nora

Scriptures: Genesis 32-33; Hosea 12:3-6; Matthew 15:21-28

Topics:
• Jacob returns to Canaan
• Jacob matures in faith
• Jacob wrestles with God
• Canaanite woman pleads with Jesus
• Jacob meets Esau

Outline

• Setup
  • (10:00am) name tags, coloring pages
  • together: Matthew 6 “Lord’s prayer“
  • Sing —
  • memory verse (Ps. 146:5-6)
  • Lesson — (see below)
  • Craft — (see below)
  • (11:00 am) SNACK/BREAK
  • (11:20 am) activity — (See below)
  • stickers or bookmarks
  • Sing —
  • Praying: [Justin]
  • (11:50 am) tidy

Lesson

1. Review Genesis 28 – 31 — [Paul.]
• [lesson sections are point form, as reminders only]

• Jacob left Canaan because: Esau wanted to murder him; Isaac told him to marry one of Laban’s daughters
• [Esau married again; his third wife was an Ishmaelite]
• On the way to Paddan-Aram / Haran, Jacob stopped in Luz and fell asleep with his head on (or beside) a rock
• Dream: ladder/staircase reaching from earth to heaven, God’s angels going up and down
• The cross/salvation of our Lord is like a ladder between earth and heaven (see John 1:51)
• God, standing beside the ladder, announced the three Abraham promises to Jacob: land; many descendants; your family will be a blessing to all people
• God also promised to be with Jacob, and to bring him back to Canaan
• Jacob set the rock as a pillar, poured oil on it, and called the place Bethel (“house of God“)
• Jacob made a bargain-type promise to God — if You look after me, You will be my God; I will give back one tenth of everything You have given me
• At Haran, Jacob met Rachel at a well, rolled away the huge stone that was covering it, and watered the sheep
• Laban had two daughters
• Jacob loved Rachel, and asked for her hand in marriage in return for seven years of labor
• At the marriage feast, Laban had Leah wearing the bridal veil
• After a week, Jacob also married Rachel, but had to work another seven years for this second marriage
• Laban also gave servants Zilpah and Bilhah to his daughters

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- Over the next seven years, Jacob had 11 sons and (at least 1) daughter with those four women; Rachel's first child was Joseph, and Rachel credited God for that son. Joseph was Jacob's 11th son, and after he was born, Rachel prayed for another son. Leah's son Judah is the ancestor of our Lord; (we didn't mention this last time).

- Review family tree:

- When Jacob wanted to leave after this second seven-year service, Laban made another deal with Jacob: keep working, and I'll pay you whatever you like.
- Jacob requested the spotted/speckled goats and sheep, as well as the black lambs, as payment; Laban agreed.
- Jacob positioned this as a method of assuring that he couldn't get away with stealing — but Jacob had a plan to trick Laban and end up with more livestock.
- Laban also planned to trick Jacob.
- Laban secretly stole the spotted/speckled/black animals from the flocks, and had Jacob travel with the flock 3 days journey away from him.
- Jacob arranged branches with speckles and either showed them or hid them, depending on the animals that were at the water troughs — he wanted the speckled/spotted ones to grow healthier.
- God blessed this plan, not because it made any sense, but because this was God's decision — this parallels earlier schemes of Rebekah and Jacob.
- Jacob became very rich with many sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys, and a lot of servants.
- Laban became unfriendly, and Laban's sons complained about Jacob.
- God told Jacob to return to Canaan.
- Jacob met Leah and Rachel in the field where the sheep were — they weren't pleased with their father Laban either.
- Jacob quietly left with Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, Bilhah, all their children, and all of their sheep, goats, camels, and etc. — everything they had.
- on the way out, Rachel stole the family idols while Laban was out sheering sheep.
- after three days, Laban found out that they had left, so he got some of his family together and they chased them for seven days.
- Jacob's camp was in the hills, and Laban caught up with him there, setting up camp nearby.
- God warned Laban in a dream to not make any threats or promises to Jacob.
- Laban went to Jacob and complained about the "kidnapping," and the stolen idols.
- Jacob said that if anyone in his camp was found to have stolen the idols, he would have that person killed.
- Rachel sat on a saddle bag that was hiding the idols while Laban searched everywhere for them.
- Jacob became angry with Laban for treating him like a criminal; Jacob noted his 20 years of diligent work for Laban — 14 for his daughters, and 6 more for the animals.

• Jacob confessed that “the fearsome God worshiped by Abraham and my father Isaac” had been on his side
• “Sons of Jacob” song, public domain lyrics improvised by Kim Dailey:  
  (to the tune of “Ten Little Indians”)  
  Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah,  
  Issachar, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali,  
  Gad and Asher, Joseph, Benjamin  
  These are the sons of Jacob.

2. Jacob returns to Canaan —

Jacob set up some rocks, ate a meal together, and agreed to each stay on his side of the rocks — not passing by to attack the other
• the piled rocks were to remind them of their agreement
• Jacob offered an animal in sacrifice
• the next morning, Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren goodbye, and he left to return home
• [Genesis 32 begins here]; Jacob and his family set out to return to Canaan
• who was in Canaan? [so far as Jacob knew, his parents and his brother Esau]
• what did Jacob remember about Esau? [Esau hated him and wanted to kill him]
• Esau lived in the land of Edom (see map), which was named for him
• Jacob was at least a little concerned about Esau at this point [though he will become more frightened soon]
• at their first campsite, some of God’s angels came to meet Jacob
• “This is God’s camp!” Jacob said, and named the place they were at Mahanaim, which means “two camps” — show on map (— likely east of Succoth, just north of the Jabbok River) — Jacob knew that God had His own camp, and that God was Jacob’s shield
• wondering about Esau, Jacob sent some messengers ahead of his traveling group to speak to Esau
• the messengers found Esau, and at Jacob’s command, they spoke to him like this:
• “Master Esau, we are messengers of your brother Jacob. He has lived with uncle Laban all this time, and now he owns lots of cattle, donkeys, and sheep, as well as many slaves. Master Esau, your servant Jacob is hoping that you will be kind to him!”
• these messengers noticed that Esau had 400 men with him
• Esau and his men began traveling toward where Jacob was, so the messengers ran ahead
• “Jacob, your brother Esau is coming this
way, and he has 400 men with him!”
• this frightened Jacob; it seemed Esau was on his way to attack Jacob [– and Esau likely was planning to attack]
• do you remember? Esau was an outdoorsman, and an excellent hunter
• “Esau and his men may kill all of us!” Jacob thought
• Jacob divided all of his people and all of his animals into two groups
• “if Esau attacks one group, maybe the other group can escape — this will be better than all of us dying!”
• (what kind of animals did Jacob have with him? — sheep, goats, cattle, camels, donkeys)
• (who were the people with Jacob? wives Leah/Rachel, their servants Zilpah/Bilhah, his 11 young sons, his daughter Dinah (and possibly other daughters), as well as lots of servants/employees)
• we’re happy to report that Jacob was learning to trust God — after dividing his camp into two groups, Jacob prayed to the LORD:
  • “Yahweh, you are the God of my grandfather Abraham, and of my father Isaac. When you told me to leave Canaan and visit my family in Haran, you promised to look after me and you did! I have not deserved all the good things you have done for me. I am your servant. When I first crossed over to this side of the Jordan river, all I had with me was my walking stick! Now, on the way home, I have these two large groups of people and animals. Dear God, please save me from my brother Esau. I am afraid that he is going to come here and attack me, and maybe he will also attack my wives and my children! But God, you have promised me success, and you have promised that someday I will have so many descendants that it will be as difficult to count them as to count the sand at the beach so, God, please rescue me and my family from Esau.”
• [we are thankful to God that He similarly teaches us that we can trust Him, even though we are not worthy of His gifts and strength]
• Jacob slept the night
• the next morning, Jacob prepared a 9 gifts for Esau, each a herd of animals: he picked out over five-hundred animals! (200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 female sheep, 20 male sheep, 30 female camels and their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, 10 male donkeys)
• Jacob appointed servants to manage each herd of animals, and he arranged the herds in a line-up, one herd behind the next, with the appointed servants each behind their herd
• Jacob ordered his servants: “go ahead of me and keep a space between each herd”
• then he told the servants that were in charge of the first herd, the one at the very front of the line: “When Esau meets you, he is going to ask you who is your master. He will ask you where you are going, and who owns the animals that are with you. Tell him this: These animals belong to your servant, your brother Jacob, who is coming this way — he is sending these animals as a gift to you, his master Esau.”
• As with the first group, Jacob told the managers of the second herd to say this same thing when they met Esau
• Jacob was hoping that the gifts would help angry Esau be friendly by the time they met! Jacob knew that he had mistreated Esau
• Jacobs servants and the herds went ahead, but Jacob stayed in that camp to spend the night

3. Jacob wrestles with God — [.Justin.]

Genesis 32:28
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.

- in the middle of that same night, Jacob got up and took his wives, his children, and everything he owned, across the Jabbok River (– show on map –), and then went back to the north side of the river by himself
- the reason he took his family and animals across the river was to keep them safe
- all alone in the night now, Jacob had a visitor
- in the form of a man, God came to Jacob!
- (the invisible God had now appeared to Jacob as a man)
- it’s a rare thing for God to visit anybody as a man, and Jacob was now wise enough to know a good opportunity when he saw one — so Jacob would not let God leave him
- to test Jacob, God wrestled to get away from him
- Jacob would not give up — he would not let God go — (recall Jacob holding Esau’s heel)
- when God saw that Jacob would not give up, and the sun would soon rise — so God sped up the fight by hitting Jacob’s hip so hard that Jacob’s thigh bone popped right out of his hip socket
- the hip joint is the most important pivot point for a wrestler!
- Jacob kept on wrestling
- “Let go of me!” God, in the form of a man, said to Jacob. “It’s almost daylight.”
- “I will not let you go until you bless me,” Jacob said to God
- Jacob knew that God was the One who gave him everything that he had — Jacob knew that there could be nothing better than another gift from God, and now was his chance
- “What is your name?” God asked Jacob
- “Jacob,” he answered
- “Not anymore,” said God. “I am changing your name to The-Man-Who-Wrestles-with-God — ISRAEL — because now you have wrestled with God and won!”
- “Now tell me your name,” Jacob said
- “Don’t you know who I AM?” God asked
- and there, God gave a blessing to Jacob
- “this night I have seen God face to face, but I am still alive,” Jacob said
- yes, Jacob had wrestled with God and lived — now did he really need to be very worried about Esau?
- Jacob named that place Peniel, which means “face of God” — (show Peniel on map, which is probably just a bit west of Mahanaim, on the way toward Succoth)
- the sun rose, and Jacob limped away from that place called Peniel [recall injured hip-joint]
- remembering their father Jacob/Israel, the Israelite people never again would eat the hip muscle of any animal — that muscle which holds the thigh bone in the socket
- Israelite people, the descendants of Jacob, are still living on the earth today
- the strict/religious Jews among them have rules about food; food they are allowed to eat is called kosher food
- even today, those strict Jews among the Israelite people who are Jacob’s descendants avoid eating meat from the hindquarters of an animal — the tendons/nerves around the hip are not kosher
- for example, they will not eat T-Bone, Tenderloin, or Sirloin unless a qualified kosher butcher has carefully prepared the meat, having cut out the [sciatic nerve]


- almost 2000 years later, Jesus Christ was traveling near the cities of Tyre and Sidon, about 120 km northwest of the spot where Jacob wrestled with God
- suddenly a Canaanite woman who lived in that region came out shouting, “Lord, please help me! My daughter is full of demons.”
- Jesus did not answer her
• the woman kept following Jesus and his students, and pleading with him to help
• does this remind you of Jacob, who would not give up when he wanted God to bless him?
• the students who were with Jesus said to him, “please, Lord, send this woman away!”
• so Jesus said to the woman, “i was not sent to this world to save Canaanite people — God sent me to save the Israelites, because they are like sheep who are lost.”
• remember when God said to Jacob, “Let go of me — it’s almost daylight!” Jacob answered, “I will not let you go until you bless me.”
• now this woman also insisted with Jesus, the Son of God. she knelt and begged him, “Please help me, Lord!”
• so Jesus said, “I have come to help my sheep in Israel, but you want me to help you? Don’t you know that it would be wrong for a father to take food away from his child and feed it to his pet dogs?”
• “That is true, Lord,” the woman said, “But even dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their owner’s table.”
• Jesus saw that:
  • she did not consider herself to deserve anything from Jesus,
  • BUT, she believed that He could help her, and
  • she was not going to give up
• so Jesus blessed her!
• “Dear woman,” he said, “you have a lot of faith, and I have given you what you want.” at that very moment, Jesus healed her daughter. She went home to find her daughter healthy and free of demons.

5. Jacob meets Esau — Gen. 33 — [Justin]

• after limping away from Peniel, where he wrestled with God, Jacob had another long day ahead
• the servants had already delivered the gifts from Jacob to Esau, and Esau was near with his four hundred men
• Jacob sent each of his children to their mothers
• Zilpah walked toward Esau’s group with her
sons, Gad and Asher

• Bilhah walked along Zilpah with her sons Dan and Naphtali
• Leah followed with her children, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah
• behind her was Rachel with her only child, Joseph
• father Jacob walked in front of them all
• as he came near his brother Esau, Jacob bowed to the ground seven times
• we might have expected Esau to angerly attack Jacob and his family, but he did not
• instead, Esau ran toward Jacob and hugged and kissed him
• both brothers cried (emotions: relief, and happy to see each other)
• when Esau saw the four women with all their children, he asked “Whose children are these?”
• “These are the children that the LORD has been kind enough to give to me, your servant.”
• then the two servant women, Zilpah and Bilhah, with all of their children, came and bowed down before Esau
• then Leah and her children came and bowed down
• finally, Joseph and his mother Rachel came and bowed down before Esau
• Esau asked Jacob, “Why did you send all the herds ahead of you? I met them all along the road.”
• “Master,” Jacob answered, “I sent them so that you would be friendly to me.”
• “But, brother,” Esau replied, “I do not need these gifts from you, because I already have plenty. You keep these.”
• “No!” Jacob said. “Please accept these gifts as a sign of your friendship for me. When you welcomed me and I saw your face, it was like seeing the face of God.”
• Jacob knew that he had seen God at Peniel, and lived — here, he saw the face of his brother, who he thought might kill him, yet he lived
• “Please accept these gifts I brought to you,” said Jacob. “God has been good to me, and I have everything I need.”
• Jacob insisted, so Esau accepted the gifts.
• Remember, Jacob had stolen the blessing from Esau — but now Jacob was giving gifts to Esau
• “Let’s get ready to finish traveling back to our home country,” Esau said. “I’ll go with you.”
• But Jacob answered, “Master, you know traveling is hard on children, and I have to look after the sheep and goats that are nursing their young. If my animals travel too much in one day, they will all die. Why don’t you go on ahead and let me travel along slowly with the children, the herds, and the flocks. We can meet again in your land, Edom.”
• Esau replied, “Let me leave some of my men with you.”
• “You don’t need to do that,” Jacob answered. “I am happy, simply knowing that you are friendly to me.”
• So Esau and his men left Jacob and his family.
• Esau returned to his place, Edom.
• Jacob traveled farther west, toward the Jordan river
• There, he built a house for himself and set up shelters for his animals.
• Because of this, that place is called Succoth, which means “shelters.” (Show Succoth on the map.)
• from Succoth, Jacob and his family and animals traveled safely to Shechem, in Canaan land, and set up camp near the city
• Jacob bought some land from the owners (recall Abraham purchasing the field in Canaan)
• after setting up the tents, Jacob built an altar there to honor his God, the God of ISRAEL(!), and called the altar “El-Elohe-Israel,” which means “God, the God of Israel.”
• this is the same place where Abraham built
his first altar in the promised land of Canaan

Review Jacob’s Life of Struggling:

- Genesis 25:22–26 – Jacob wrestles with his brother in his mother’s womb;
- Genesis 27 – Jacob struggles with his brother Esau for his birthright;
- Genesis 29:15–20 – Jacob struggles with his uncle Laban to get a wife;
- Genesis 32:22–32 – Jacob wrestles with God before confronting his brother.

Craft/Activity

Possible craft ideas:

- cut a stand-up card of:
  - Jacob wrestling with an angel/man,
  - Canaanite woman kneeling, or
  - Jacob meeting Esau
- fold/cut/unfold zigzag cards (you cut one pattern and unfold a series of them connected head/tail/head) of:
  - drove of animals that are a gift from Jacob to Esau,
  - Esau’s soldiers, or
  - the disciples wanting to send away the Canaanite woman
  - some activity looking up meanings of names (Jacob, Israel, Rachel, Leah, the children, as well as kids in the class)
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Jacob wrestles with angel of God – click for full size