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**Jacob's Blessing
The God Who Blesses
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Have you ever had a time when you just needed a hug?

I had a morning like this recently.

I had inadvertently set the alarm clock for 6:30 p.m. instead of 6:30 a.m. so we didn't start rolling out of bed until 7:45.

The dog had been sprayed by a skunk the night before so I shut her in the bathroom. I couldn't find my shoes and I couldn't find my travel coffee mug.

The meeting was in 30 minutes, the commute was 40 minutes, and although I checked again that morning the speed limit was still 55.

No problem. I went a little faster than usual, just this once, so that when the person in front of me stopped short, I jammed on my brakes and spilled my coffee all over the front seat because I never had found the travel mug.

There was still a little bit of it left though, sloshing around in the bottom of the mug. But as I accelerated again, I hit a speed bump I didn't see, and the rest of the coffee splattered all over the steering wheel and the dash board.

Sometimes you just need a hug, especially after you've spilled the coffee.

And when my husband threw his arms around me at the end of the day and said "I love you" it meant everything.

Now suppose you went through life, longing for a hug but never getting it—longing for someone to ascribe value and worth to you, just because you were there—but it never happened.

Jacob in the passage we read today, had that ache—but it was for more than just the warm fuzzy of a hug.

It was for something else even more powerful.

Jacob wrestled with God at night for this longing that had been with him since childhood.

Did you ever wrestle with God in the darkness? I have.
Plead with Him in prayer for something you desired?
Go back and forth with God about a burden you're carrying, a sorrow that won't go away?
An emptiness that makes you afraid you can't go on? I know what that's like.

Jacob wrestled with God, just like we do.

Scripture says they wrestled all night, until the break of day. And when the sun was just coming over the horizon, as the haze of morning dawn was upon them, we learn what it is that Jacob wants from God, more than anything in the world.

He wants it more than fame, or wealth.
He wants it more than his own life.

**Jacob wants to be
Blessed!**

I will not let you go, God, until you bless me! (Genesis 32:26)
he declares.

**In Jewish families there was a sacred gift of
love called The Blessing, given to the oldest male child.**

This blessing had five very powerful components that we will talk about in a moment.

And it was this that Jacob stole from Esau. He dressed up as his older brother, told his blind father he was Esau, and received the blessing through a case of mistaken identity.

But as we can see here, it hadn't worked.
Human striving and deceit rarely pay off.

Fourteen years later, Jacob is still not feeling blessed.

I will not let you go until you bless me!

he says.

I don't think he requested this casually, like asking for a ham on rye.

I think the words

were wrenched from his heart, and came out with a heavy sob.

Jacob had cried many tears before. Scripture tells us that his father had eyes only for his brother Esau.

Many times as a child, Jacob had wanted his father to hug him, take delight in his boyish

pleasures. But the gleam of approval in his father's eyes had never been there.

There was no

feeling of connection with Dad, no ongoing celebration of Jacob's life as a child.

Time and again

he was brushed aside, belittled and ignored. And with tears, he'd withdraw hungry for love.

Now as a man, with sweat dripping off his brow, with his muscles aching and his body trembling

with exhaustion, he pins God down, and demands the blessing.

You see, the other blessing—the one he'd stolen 14 years ago—

Jacob knew it wasn't said for

him, valuing his worth, attaching honor to him. It had been a case of mistaken identity. And there

had been no love for Jacob in that blessing. It was all about Esau.

He'd wrestled with Esau for the Blessing. He'd wrestled with Dad for the Blessing.

Every time he'd come up short. And now he was finally wrestling with God—for the Blessing—to be blessed.

What is the Blessing really?

And why would Jacob be so desperate to attain it? Let's look at this

Jewish blessing

There are five powerful elements that it contains.

The passing on of the blessing began way back when God blessed Abraham, and continues to be passed on from generation to generation in orthodox Jewish families even today.

And it is a guide for us, as parents and grandparents of biological children and those of us who may be parents of spiritual children, or as spouses, or as caregivers, or as just members of this church

The elements of this blessing show us how to
To bless one another...in concrete meaningful ways

There were five elements to this Jewish blessing:

1. Meaningful Touch –The father, would lay his hand on his sons head so that the blessing could be received.

Meaningful touch, is critical to provide a caring background for words spoken.

How often have I stood by someone in a hospital bed and touched their arm, or held their hand, and received a look or a nod – the first sign I had that they were with me in the moment

Sometimes meaningful touch can be as simple as a hug as I shared earlier with you.

2. A Spoken Message –The father would speak words of affirmation to his child. In many families, parents may not yell at their children, and they provide a roof over their heads, and sometimes even a car to drive, but unless genuine words of affirmation like

I love you, I am so glad you are my daughter or son, are stated, children are left uncertain of their parents' acceptance and their own intrinsic worth.

Or even in our own church community, how do we bless one another? Do we say thank you often enough? Do we appreciate

each others value? Do we recognize the gifts and abilities sitting around us and do we take the time to express what we feel for each other with words?

3. Attaching High Value to the One Being Blessed –

The person receiving the blessing was always honored. To bless actually means to attach honor to someone because of who they are as God's unique creation. Get awed over your loved ones.

G.K. Chesterton said that **The greatest mystery and miracle is the person next to you.** And if you've been given a person to love—revere, value and honor them.

4. Picturing A Special Future for the One Being Blessed –

The father's blessing for the child always brought a future and a hope.

Expecting the best of someone is the nature of love.

Looking forward to a bright future, formed by the promises of God is a completely different stance than sighing, looking down at your child, or over at your spouse, shaking your head and saying, *... You'll never amount to much. You blew it again. How did I ever get stuck with you?*

And I have found that **Picturing a special future for your loved one is a very effective part of praying for them.**

5. An Active Commitment to Fulfill the Blessing –

The home for the Jewish people was ideally supposed to be an environment where this blessing could be nurtured and supported.

As parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, spouses—we are meant to do everything possible to allow our loved ones to realize God's blessing for them—to create an environment by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit that over time that will yield great fruit for God's kingdom.

If you think for a minute about it, in Jesus' ministry, all of these five components were there so often as He dealt with people.

- 1. He would touch them,**
- 2. He would speak words of healing,**
- 3. He would honor them as having faith, or not being condemned.**
- 4. Often He would tell them to go and create a better future in some way.**
- 5. Jesus' whole life was His commitment to us never to leave us or forsake us.**

In the end, God does bless Jacob.
He answers the longing of his heart.
And He does two things.

The first thing God does is that He throws Jacob's hip out of joint.

Is that what you mean when you say to someone, "God bless you"?
Go your way, and may God throw your hip out of joint!
Be careful what you say!

Why this? Because in order for Jacob to receive God's blessing, he's got to realize that it's not because of his own effort.

The Blessing has nothing to do with his own strength.
You can't go quite so fast, and think you are quite so self sufficient when you limp.

You are reminded that you are mortal and that you can't bless yourself on your own, by brute strength, craftiness, and effort.
You need the God of relentless compassion and furious love for you in Jesus Christ to lay His hand on your head, and fill your heart.

Are you limping today?
If you are limping today, that limp may be God's way of reminding you

that you need Him.
You need His blessing.
If you've been hit by life in a way that seems unfair,
If there's something that keeps hurting, or
If you've wrestled with God about a matter and come out bruised,
stop right now and ask
yourself—

Does it make me realize that I need God?
Does it help me to be more dependent on Him?
Does it make me more grateful for the gift of life?

The second thing God does as part of the blessing is that
He renames Jacob Israel; and Israel means God-Wrestler.

This time, Jacob's identity is known as he is blessed! No case of mistaken identity here!

He held onto God.
He persisted.
He hoped in God when everything else was lost.

He is loved as a God wrestler, as the nation of Israel was known as a
God wrestler and loved
down through history.

The five elements of the blessing are wrapped up in this encounter
with God.

- 1. The physical contact is there, even if it's a wrestling match, it depicts human intimacy with God.**
- 2. The message spoken to Jacob is his new God given name —Israel, based upon whom God knew Jacob to be and loving him for it.**
- 3. Jacob is honored by this name – the name that would be the name of God's people forever - Israel**
- 4. The picture of the future, and the value and worth ascribed to Jacob as the father of Israel is clear.**
- 5. And finally God's promise to Jacob in Genesis...[I will never leave you.](#) (Genesis 28:15) is God's commitment to see this blessing accomplished.**

You may not have gotten the Blessing as a child.
You may not have felt particularly cared for or valued growing up.
You may be a lot like Jacob; a survivor who has learned to live by
struggling, and getting by on meager emotional and spiritual scraps.
And maybe you've been
highly successful living on scraps.
Jacob was. Fourteen years of toil had given him great wealth.

Yet, still he cries out with a sob,
I'm empty. O dear God, bless me!

If you are crying that today, The God of Jesus Christ wants to fill you
up with His blessing.

**The cup in communion – the one after supper in the Passover
Meal – is called “the cup of blessing”** – there were four cups at
Passover...but that is why I always say – “after he had supped...
Jesus took the cup...because cup in Passover after supper... was the
cup of blessing”

This is who Jesus is for us...

We are literally receiving a blessing in communion today

There are no strings attached to this blessing.

The blessing is not something you earn.

It is not something that you need to deserve because no one does.

It is not a case of mistaken

identity because God sees you and knows you completely right now,
at this moment.

You don't

have to be someone you're not to receive His blessing.

The blessing of the love of Jesus Christ is

completely free for you right now if you will receive it.

You have got to receive the blessing of His love, before you can give
it away.

You can't bless

those you love, until you've been blessed first.

Even if you took all of those five elements home

with you today and tried to do them, without the love of God flowing

through you for your
family, it would all seem shallow and forced.

But once Jacob is blessed by God, look what happens next. Jacob limps out to greet Esau – his twin brother who hated him. Jacob would always limp now.

He'd been with Almighty God and is now dependent on Him.

As he limps he's aware of his own mortality, and his vulnerability. And in his woundedness he moves toward reconciliation. He doesn't have to fight his brother anymore.

Being blessed in the presence of God always moves us toward reconciliation and blessing others.

When you are known completely, and loved completely, you give love. You just can't help it.
The two brothers – previously at each others throats - embrace and weep.

And then, Jacob, who has been blessed, gives his brother a blessing...that comes straight from his heart.
He tells his brother that seeing His face is like seeing the face of God.

May we be faithful like Jacob to receive and give God's blessing...Let us Pray