

PREPARING AT HOME

July 31-August 6, 2017

Focus reading: Genesis 32:22–31 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=366349818>).

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 17:1–7, 15, Romans 9:1–5, Matthew 14:13–21

Theme: Struggle

Last week we left Jacob on his way to Haran, fleeing the expected and well-deserved retaliation of the brother he wronged, Esau. We learn, however, that Jacob was not able to outrun his past. Fast-forward many years to Jacob's departure from Haran to return home, something God has directed Jacob to do. Despite the passage of time, Jacob is still afraid to face Esau, the brother he tricked out of his birthright. The night before this dreaded reunion is to take place, a tormented, fearful Jacob wrestles with "a man" so fiercely that his hip is pulled out of joint! Even so, Jacob prevails, demands and receives a blessing, and is given the new name of "Israel", meaning "one who strives with God." His sparring partner was no mere mortal, but God in human form. Jacob has seen God's face and lived, something not thought possible. At a time of great personal turmoil, God continues to fulfill the promise to form a people - a nation - out of Abraham's descendants. Perhaps this wrestling match with God helped to prepare Jacob for what was ahead. Perhaps it also foreshadows the kind of relationship this nation would have with God across the course of history.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names have great significance in the Bible. How did you come to select your child's name? Share the story with your child. What does your child's name mean? What does your name mean? Do you know how your name was chosen? Are there particular names that are common to your family? Use a baby name book or the internet to find the meanings of particular names. Is there a descriptive name that would be appropriate for you and/or your child at this time ("one who grows," "dancing diva," "smiling one," "healing one")? Make a poster of your name and its meaning, drawing images that identify you around the words.

WORRIES

Jacob was worried about reuniting with his brother. What do you worry about? Get a watering can or pitcher. Each time you or your child names a "worry," put water in the watering can. Notice how heavy it becomes. When it is full, take it outside and pour the water on plants or grass. Thank God for being with you when you worry and struggle and when you are happy.

PRAYER

Ever-present God,
We thank you that even in difficult times
you are with us,
blessing us
and renewing us.
Amen.

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