

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME: Sunday 26 July 2026**

Prepared by Graham Hepburn

Jacob and Laban - the cheater, cheated.

Welcome to this week's service at home. This is the second of a three part series about Jacob.

Call to worship

God knows all that we do, our intentions and our actions.

Let us bring all that we are to him today so that he can grow his kingdom through us.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We begin with the hymn, 'Awake, my soul, and with the sun', (Hymns and Psalms 632)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6qcFnQehLk>

1. Awake, my soul! and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

2. In conversation, be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
Think how the all-seeing God thy ways
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.

3. All praise to Thee who safe has kept.
And hast refreshed me while I slept:
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall wake,
I may of endless life partake.

4. Lord! I my vows to thee renew:
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Thyself my spirit fill.

5. Direct, control, suggest this day
All I design, or do, or say,
That all my powers, with all their might,
In thy sole glory may unite.

6. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow:
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
(*Thomas Ken, 1637-1711*)

A prayer of praise

Father, you looked upon the hearts of your people.

You saw our messy, chaotic lives
and loved us enough to send your Son, Jesus.

Father, we give you thanks and praise.

Jesus, you came, a treasure from heaven to
walk this earth,
teaching and serving before suffering,
for the love of those you came to save.

Jesus, we give you thanks and praise.

Holy Spirit, through Jesus, you reside in and
with us.

You remind, prompt and help us with all that
we need

to navigate our days in integrity and love.

Spirit, we give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

Lord, for when we've got things wrong and
chosen the easy way out,
deflected blame instead of owning up:

Lord, please forgive us.

When we've neglected to show love,
hurting others with our words and actions:

Lord, please forgive us.

When we've retreated behind our masks,
denying ourselves and others:

Lord, please forgive us.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

Jacob is on a journey, following his father, Isaac's instruction, to go to Paddan Aram (not a town, but the region of North West Mesopotamia) to find a wife from the house of Isaac's family, rather than marrying a local Canaanite woman. Following his dream (Genesis 28 verses 10 to 22), Jacob has now

arrived and been welcomed into the household of his uncle, Laban.

Reading - Genesis 29:14b-30

Jacob marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, **15** Laban said to him, 'Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.'

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. **17** Leah had weak (or delicate) eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. **18** Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.'

19 Laban said, 'It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.' **20** So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.'

22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. **23** But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. **24** And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?'

26 Laban replied, 'It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the elder one. **27** Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.'

28 And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. **29** Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. **30** Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

Reflection

I can't deny feeling a certain satisfaction, when a cheater is caught out at their own game. Be it in a film, in a sporting event, or more generally in life.

Have you ever cheated? How were you when you played board games or card games when you were younger, or not so young? Have you ever cheated by queue jumping? Perhaps pushing in a lane when you were driving?

My wife tells a story about when she was playing a game with her uncle when she was a girl. Her mother came into the room and said, what is going on here? All I can hear is you two saying to each other, 'You're cheating'. 'No, you're cheating!'

Can anyone honestly say that they have never cheated?

Aided by his mother, Rebekah, Jacob has cheated his brother Esau out of his father, Isaac's blessing. Jacob decides the best course of action is to run away, and he finally ends up with his uncle Laban, and his family, including his two daughters, Leah and Rachel.

Jacob wants to marry the younger daughter, Rachel, and he works seven years for this privilege. However, he is then deceived by his uncle Laban into marrying the older daughter, Leah, first, and having to work another seven years before he can marry Rachel.

Whilst having more than one wife was acceptable in that society at that time, it is interesting how Jacob's favouritism for Rachel, and the jealousy between Leah and Rachel affects the story as we read on about Jacob's twelve sons by his two wives and their slaves, the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Was it a family trait that cheating was in their make up for Laban and Jacob? Or does Laban know the family history of Jacob and feel that he deserves to be on the receiving end of the cheating that he has dished out to his brother?

There is a reminder here to us of how we should behave, not only in our families, but also more generally with everyone.

As Thomas Ken wrote in our opening hymn, 'In conversation, be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
Think how the all-seeing God thy ways
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.'

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We sing the hymn, 'Forgive our sins as we forgive' (StF 423),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj91JOq2Xpw>

1. 'Forgive our sins as we forgive,'
you taught us, Lord, to pray,
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

2. How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

3. In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
what trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to you!

4. Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace.
(*Rosamond Eleanor Herklots, (1905-1987)*)

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

We dedicate our weekly offering, and all our giving, however it is made, praying for those who will prayerfully decide how it is spent within our Circuit and beyond.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, our money,
and all our offerings, and with them our lives,
to be used in mission and service through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Almighty God, bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

Bless those surrounded by war, violence and upheaval, living in now derelict and destroyed areas that were once comfortable places to live. Bless them in their distress, in their pain, in their loss and confusion. Bless them in their searching for new ways, new hopes, new dreams, new homes. Bless them in their search to make sense of life and love.

Bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

Bless those who live with divisions between race, religion, ethnicity. Those who are segregated for their faith, tortured for their faith, cast adrift because of their faith, unfairly treated because of their faith. Those who stand out from the crowd and are discriminated against because of their ethnicity. Especially remembering this week Israel and the Holy Land and all its strife.

Bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

Bless those families who will struggle to cope during the summer school holidays, those struggling to feed their families without extra school support, those who struggle with lack of indoor space and precious little, if any, outdoor space to healthily wear out the children before bedtime. Bless those who have had poor experience of being parented and who now repeat the same with their own children.

Bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

Bless those living in the midst of immediately visible effects of climate change, excessive heat and flooded grounds, wildfires, landslides, parched ground. We remember all

affected by fires, those who have lost loved family members, and lifelong possessions. May we all seek to find a way to live more fairly and sustainably for this generation and the generations to come. May we all be prepared to sacrifice something for the good of future generations.

Bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

Bless those in pain and anguish, physical and mental. Bless those who seek to care for them. Bless those who teeter on the edge of life, those who feel their lives are pointless and those for who life draws to an end, give them peace, security and comfort.

Bless all those for whom we pray with your presence.

Bless them Lord, bless them.

For these and all your people, Lord we pray.
Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Our final hymn is 'Help us accept each other, as Christ accepted us'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bqkTMO5fW8>

1. Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us
and Bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

2. Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

3. Let your acceptance change us
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

4. Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for justice and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
Lord, free us, make us one!

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

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I am conscious that I have only covered the
Old Testament lectionary reading for this
Sunday.

For information, you may also like to read the
other readings,

Romans 8 verses 26-39

Matthew 13 verses 31-33 and 44-52

Blessing

We use the doxology from our opening hymn
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow:
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
(*Thomas Ken, 1637-1711*)

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