

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME: Sunday 2 August 2026
Prepared by Graham Hepburn

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

Jacob wrestles with God

Call to Worship, Psalm 77, v 11-15

With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.'

Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We begin with Charles Wesley's great hymn about Jacob wrestling with God, 'Come, O thou Traveller unknown,' (StF 461). There are multiple arrangements on YouTube, I hope you like the rather dramatic one I have chosen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrs4y4IK46Q>

1. Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
whom still I hold but cannot see;
My company before is gone,
and I am left alone with Thee;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
and wrestle till the break of day.

2. I need not tell Thee who I am,
my misery and sin declare;
thysself hast called me by my name,
look on Thy hands, and read it there;
but who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me Thy name, and tell me now.

3. In vain thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold;
art Thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of Thy love unfold;
wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
till I Thy name, Thy nature know.

4. 'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me,
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee:
Pure, universal Love Thou art;
To me, to all Thy mercies move;
Thy nature and Thy name is Love.

5. The Sun of Righteousness on me
hath risen with healing in his wings;
Withered my nature's strength; from thee, my
soul its life and succour brings;
My help is all laid up above;
Thy nature, and thy name is love.
Charles Wesley, (1707-1788)

Charles Wesley wrote 14 verses to this hymn!
We have 12 in our hymn book. If you wish,
you can spend 17 minutes singing along with
the full 14 verses at the following link! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJfywq7J90M>

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

All-powerful God,
how can we ever thank you enough
for what you did and continue to do for us?
You hate sin but love the sinner.
You never give up on us. Your love never
wains.
You know and understand us.
Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in,
we can cling tight and draw strength from
you,
for you have hold of our right hand.
You never let go. You never abandon us.
Thank you that you work all things for our
good,
nurturing us and strengthening our character.
Lord God, we give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

A prayer of adoration

Father God, who probes our hearts with
tender mercy,
**how wonderful is your great love that holds
us tight.**

Anointed One, Son of God, full of
righteousness and compassion,
**how wonderful is your great love that holds
us tight.**

Divine Holy Spirit, who awakens our

conscience, enlightening us,
how wonderful is your great love that holds us tight.

**Three-fold blessings are ours.
Amen.**

A prayer of confession

Lord God, we often struggle with our conscience, wrestling with negative emotions, weaknesses and imperfections.

We hold tight to you, but sometimes find our grip loosening.

We struggle with dread and worry about what may lie ahead, instead of looking to you and placing our trust in your love.

**Lord God, forgive our failings we pray.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading - Genesis 32.22-31;

Jacob wrestles with God

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. **24** So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. **25** When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. **26** Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.'

But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'

27 The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered.

28 Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, (Israel probably means he struggles with God) because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.'

29 Jacob said, 'Please tell me your name.'

But he replied, 'Why do you ask my name?' Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, (meaning *face of God*) saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. **32** Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

The other Lectionary Bible readings for this Sunday are

Psalms 17:1-7,15;

Romans 9.1-5;

Matthew 14.13-21

Reflection

Charles Wesley sometimes used the practice of repeating a line throughout his hymns. One of my favourite hymns, 'Son of God, if your free grace, again has raised me up (Singing the Faith 336) has the last lines, 'keep me, keep me, gracious Lord, and never let me go,' repeated through the hymn.

In our first hymn, 'Come, O thou Traveller unknown,' Wesley does this with more than one line

- firstly, the lines, repeated at the end of verses 3 and 4,

'wrestling, I will not let thee go,
till I thy name, thy nature know'.

In his wrestling with God, Jacob holds on to God. He will not let go, he stubbornly refuses to until he receives the blessing of the person he is wrestling with. God blesses Jacob and reaffirms the covenant that he made with his

forefathers. That is the message for us. That through our struggles, through our wrestling, the important thing is to hold on to God, as Jacob did, so that we too can then receive the blessing, as Jacob did.

Like Jacob, Like Paul, we have to wrestle with issues too, in our lives and in our faith. The turning point for us too can come when we accept what we have done in the past is not a barrier between us and God, when we fully accept who and what we are. When we no longer have any illusions about ourselves. When we see ourselves not in the light of our achievements, our possessions, or the picture that we present of ourselves to the world. But when instead we see ourselves in the light of the presence and the truth of God.

That encounter, or encounters plural, can leave their mark on us for the rest of our lives, as it did leave a mark with Jacob with his hip being displaced. The crucial encounter for us all is when we learn the truth about ourselves, and because of that truth, or despite that truth, we are still blessed by God.

The second line used by Wesley (in the full version of the hymn, in the six verses from seven to twelve) is the line
'thy nature and thy name is love.'

When Jacob says that his name is Jacob, the man says your name will now be Israel, meaning you struggle with God. The man blesses him. Jacob realises that he has been wrestling with God, that he has seen God face to face, and has lived to tell the tale. Jacob limps off to catch up with the rest of his entourage, and to what turns out to be an emotional reunion with his brother Esau.

But Jacob didn't know that would happen. That is why he wrestled all night, hoping and praying again for the safety that God had provided for him, since he asked God in his dream at Bethel.

At Bethel, Jacob's dream reminded him, and reminds us, that God is not remote and aloof from his world, The realms of the spiritual and the physical are not separate but are linked by God. When he faced his biggest challenge, Jacob knew that he had to put behind his

cheating self. He had to wrestle with the person he was and the man that he and God wanted him to be.

Jacob discovered that God's nature and his name was love. Through that realisation, he was able to face his reunion with the brother he had cheated, and to finally face up to his role as one of the patriarchs of the nation that would later bear his new name, Israel.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We sing the hymn Hymn 427, I'm accepted, I'm forgiven (20C, 2V, irreg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmJSEhn7DtU>

I'm accepted, I'm forgiven,
I am fathered by the true and living God
I'm accepted, no condemnation
I am loved by the true and living God

There's no guilt or fear as I draw near
To the saviour and creator of the world
There is joy and peace
As I release my worship to you O God.
(Rob Hayward c. 1985 Thankyou Music)

Prayers of intercession

Lord, give us generosity of spirit:

help us to recognise that everyone we meet is special.

Lord, we pray for all children and teachers currently on summer holidays. We thank you for opportunities for rest and recreation. We pray for those families we know who are on holiday at the moment.

We pray for summer camps and missions that bring the good news of your love to thousands of children, including our own holiday events in our circuit churches.

We pray that many will come to have a deeper relationship with you because of their time away. We thank you for those who first told us about you and helped us grow in our faith.

Lord, give us generosity of spirit:

help us to recognise that everyone we meet is special.

Lord, we pray for your world. There seems to

be so much that is not how you created it to be. We are aware of global warming creating extreme weather conditions. As we see the awful pictures on our televisions, we pray for all those affected by heat, fires, floods and famines. We especially remember farmers whose crop yields are being affected by our current weather patterns.

We pray for our government and the decisions and hard choices they need to make between economy and cost of living and climate change. Help us to do our part to slow the effects of global warming even if it is inconvenient for us, always remembering that our decisions can affect the poorest people in your world.

Lord, give us generosity of spirit:
help us to recognise that everyone we meet is special.

We remember places of war and unrest throughout the world. We lift Ukraine and the ongoing war between Israel, the USA and Iran, to you once again, Lord. We think of any other places we have heard about in the news. We pray for all who are suffering because of war. We pray for refugees and all those who travel to try and find a better life for themselves or their families. We pray for anyone who is a victim of trafficking and exploitation. Give us all a sense of the worth of every human being and how we are all made in your image.

Most of all, we hold before you all who work for peace in these areas. Give them courage and strength to continue their good work.

Lord, give us generosity of spirit:
help us to recognise that everyone we meet is special.

We think now of our plans for the week ahead. We picture in our minds places we have planned to go and people we expect to meet. We commit our encounters, our energies, our activities to you. Help us to be accessible and present to those we spend time with. Help us to be willing to be interrupted.

Lord, give us generosity of spirit:
help us to recognise that everyone we meet is special.

We ask all these things in the name of the God who rejoices in us.

Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayers. Send us out to serve you and others and to find you in all we do.

Amen.

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, accept all our 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.**

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Our final hymn is 'Captain of Israel's host and guide, (StF 459) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt4CpbbkXMg>

1. Captain of Israel's host, and guide
of all who seek the land above,
Beneath thy shadow we abide,
The cloud of thy protecting love;
Our strength, thy grace; our rule, thy word;
Our end, the glory of the Lord.

2. By thine unerring Spirit led,
We shall not in the desert stray;
We shall not full direction need,
Nor miss our providential way;
As far from danger as from fear,
While love, almighty love, is near
Charles Wesley(1707-1788)

Sending and blessing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for evermore.

Amen.

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