



## Jacob's Main Event – Touchpoint for October 15, 2025

### Genesis 32:21-32 (NRSVUE)

<sup>22</sup> The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. <sup>24</sup> Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup> Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup> So, he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved." <sup>31</sup> The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> Therefore, to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

**Grace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and breathe and have our being.**

*"For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved."*

In his tussle with God or whoever he was wrestling, Jacob was left with a physical marker of his identity. That marker served as a reminder of who he was and who he will always be. His significant limp would be his companion every time he attempted to take control away from God. When overcome with fear, he will no longer need to manipulate outcomes. When fearful of being deprived he will never again need to deceive others and take what is not his. When demanding to be seen by God, he will not need to demand "the blessing."

Jacob will always have his limp to remember he was touched by God and given his identity. He need not wrestle to achieve the blessing that was always his. He simply needs to walk. And with every step a smile will come to his face as he remembers how many times his ego got him in trouble. Yet he survived. Jacob will recall God was with him even in his knuckleheaded decisions.

Jacob will learn that our identity will emerge only through struggle, pain and blessing.

Jacob will remember the first moment he saw his wife, Rachel. Jacob will recall when he was deceived by his future father-in-law Laban, in his pursuit of marrying Rachel. He persevered years of heavy labor under Laban to receive a blessing to wed Rachel.

Whatever Jacob wanted he pursued it with everything he had. He used his gift of perseverance to get what he wanted. That gift of dogged, relentless determination finally paid off for Jacob. But it will not come without a struggle.

In one pivotal moment of intense conflict, his understanding of his true self will mark his journey of transformation into an integrated person. He would come face to face with God.

It is said that as we know ourselves, we will know God. And as we know God, we will know ourselves.

Until this crucial moment, Jacob had been at war with the world around him. He battled his past and the consequences of his conniving. Now, Jacob was about to face the brother he'd perceived as an enemy. His brother Esau was all that lay between him and his journey home.

The day before he would face his brother Esau, he sent his messengers to test the water with Esau. They returned with a message. Esau was coming out to meet Jacob and had four hundred men following him. A show of incredible force was on the way to meet his estranged brother Jacob.

Jacob does what Jacob does. He attempted to manipulate the outcome. He sends his family ahead to be the first ones Esau encounters. He fashions pity on himself. He divides his possessions into two separate camps to preserve some sort of dignity. Jacob is protecting himself much like we desperately protect our ego, by attempting to avoid conflict.

Jacob is still operating under the name he was given at birth, Jacob, "the heel-grabber."

The night before, he remains alone and pleads to God for help. But he does something different this time. Instead of pursuing a favorable outcome for himself, he confesses his life of deceit. Jacob asks to be blessed. Jacob does not pretend to be somebody else the way he did with his blind father. Jacob had glued hair to his body and posed as his hairy older brother Esau, to get their father's blessing. The blessing was reserved for Esau.

This battle was different. It wasn't with others. It was not a battle for title or stuff. I don't even think it was a battle with a man, an angel or God. Jacob wrestled himself. Jacob in his powerlessness to extricate himself from impending death seeks a blessing from God.

In his wrestling with his self, Jacob was wrestling with God. When it was over he saw God face to face. Like a mirror, he saw his true self in the face of God. Jacob was the man (human), the angel and a reflection of God (divine). They were at war with each other for the last time.

Jacob's identity was never to be found in what he could acquire or who he could deceive. His identity was in the face of God.

When we wrestle with our shadow selves we wrestle with God. Why? Because we can never be something we are not. We can only pretend.

You see according to the lineage of Jacob's ancestry he was already blessed. Jacob was part of the trifecta. Messengers from God announced who sent them by saying, "I come from the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Funny thing is, Jacob was wrestling to get something he already had.

Jacob does not win the wrestling match. We never win battles with God by the way. But Jacob is commended for his relentless pursuit for God.

God wants Jacob to always remember his identity, and he is given a new name. He is transformed from Jacob "the heel-grabber" to Israel, "he who struggled with God." Jacob's limp is a reminder that he is still human, not superhuman.

The next day Jacob is greeted by his brother. Esau throws his arms around Jacob and graciously receives him and his family.

As they turn and walk back to camp arm in arm, Esau probably asked Israel, "Bro what happened to your leg?" and Israel answered, "It's a long story. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. But I'm glad it happened."

*Amen*

***Spirit in the Desert***  
**Opening Song**

**Be Still**

(London Fox Taize Choir)  
Be Still, know that I am God.

**Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

**Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

**In the Arms of God**

(Tony Alonso, Marty Haugen, Michael Joncas)

*Refrain:* Come and rest in the arms of God. Leave your worry and fear. Make your home in the heart of God. God will dry every tear. For the burden you carry will fade within God's care. Come and rest in the arms of God.

1) Gentle is God's way and humble is God's heart. God's love will light the way that leads to peace. Surely you shall see God's goodness and God's grace. Rest now in God's embrace. *Refrain*

2) Do not be afraid. God heals the broken heart. Through grief and disbelief God still remains. God and God alone will be your souls true rest. Fall in the arms of God.

*Refrain*

3) You are not alone, for God is always near. Come place your doubt and fear within God's care. God will give you rest, and soothe your weary soul. Dwell in the heart of God.

*Refrain*

**The Meal**

**The Lord's Prayer**

(Robert Stone, The Cambridge Singers, John Rutter)

**Benediction**

**Create in Me a Clean Heart**

Create in me a clean heart, oh God  
And renew a right spirit within me  
Create in me a clean heart, oh God  
And renew a right spirit within me

**AMEN**