

Sermon Series: Ordinary Solutions, Extraordinary Results
Sermon Title: “Limping Toward the Sunrise”
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Scripture: Genesis 32:22

22 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. **23** He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. **24** Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. **25** 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. **26** Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” **27** So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” **28** 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.” **29** 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. **30** So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved.” **31** The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Summary

We encounter Jacob struggling and fighting through a dark time - a time of intense struggle. Like Jacob, there are times in our lives when there is trouble on every side: “when it rains, it pours.” Sometimes we find ourselves somewhere between bondage and blessing, between midnight and morning. The Bible tells us that weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning. But the question is how do you make it between midnight and morning? What do we do in that strange liminal space where we sometimes find ourselves: that space between bondage and blessing? How do we hang on until change comes?

All of us have encountered Jacob – the trickster, the sinner and shameless shyster who robbed his brother of his birth-right. But the Jacob narrative reminds us that by the grace of God each of us is a candidate for a brand-new start. Regardless of who you are, where you’ve been or what you’ve done, God can encounter you in the midnight of your situation and can transform you and make you a new creation. God can touch you so that old things become new.

Sermon Points

You can make it between midnight and morning but you have to understand:

1. **The Secret of Solitude** – Sometimes you need to be by yourself. Jacob was left alone. Sometimes we need to stand naked before God because when we stand before other people, we’re busy trying to get them to see what we have. When we are naked before God, that’s when God can do something for you. You’ve got to come to understand the secret of solitude. As long as you are surrounded by a crowd you don’t have to confront the hunger that’s in your heart. In the solitude there is a secret power and you can hear the hunger in your own heart and God

can speak to you. If you will quiet yourself, God can feed you with manna from on high and if you eat of that bread, you'll satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst. You can have a Jacob experience

2. **The Power of Perseverance** - Hold on to God. Don't ever give up. You've come this far. Persevere, don't let go no matter what. Chase the dream God has placed in your heart and don't allow doubt to dissuade you or difficulty to depress you. Keep pushing and keep praying. And keep holding on to hope and say "God, I won't let go until you bless me."
3. **The Blessing in Broken Places** – Jacob wrestled all night long and, in the morning, he is injured. He has a limp but he has something else – he has a new name, Israel. He's bruised and he's blessed. God can bless you in the broken places. God can cause you to be strong in the places you feel you are weak. It's when we are weak, when we've come to our extreme that God shows up. God can make a way out of no way.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you afraid to be alone? What do you do to avoid being alone and why?
2. What is your experience like when you stand before God all alone?
3. What dream has God placed in your heart?
4. How are you currently persevering toward God's blessings?
5. How has God transformed you in the "midnight" of a situation?
6. Where are the blessings in your broken places?