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## Title: The Gospel in Genesis: The End of Jacob

### Text: Genesis 32

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#### The Word Proclaimed

Our text this evening is Genesis 32, but we will open with Genesis 31, beginning with verse 11... this is what God's Word proclaims to us:

<sup>11</sup> Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' <sup>12</sup> And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. <sup>13</sup> I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.' "...<sup>18</sup> And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Now down to chapter 32, verse 1

<sup>1</sup> So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. <sup>2</sup> When Jacob saw them, he said, "This *is* God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

#### Introduction

Frodo Baggins is making his way up the Mount of Doom. The climax of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy is about to unfold. With Frodo is his best friend, a friend who would die for him, Samwise. Frodo's task is to rid the nations from the Ring; it is a Ring that corrupts whoever wears it. And it is a Ring, if it gets into the hands of the evil Sauron, spells doom for the entire earth.

Frodo's mission is nearly complete. It hasn't been easy. There have been missteps and dangers along the way. If Frodo accomplishes what he set out to do, the great evil that is borne by the Ring will have been vanquished. But Frodo and Samwise are not alone. Lurking around the Mount of Doom is a pitiful creature, a despicable creature, a creature who is a deadly enemy for Frodo and the entire Middle Earth -- simply because he too was once a Hobbit. Frodo has what Gollum wants. Gollum has an insatiable desire for "The Ring", the One Ring that brings him enormous power but at the same time has been slowly destroying him. Gollum knows the Ring will eventually kill him. Gollum wants it anyway. It is an evil irony: Gollum is willing to kill in order to get what will kill him. Frodo, on the other hand, has been able to avoid Gollum's fate. He has not as yet succumbed to the enormous and deadly temptation of the Ring.

The trip up the Mount of Doom is the final mission in Frodo's quest to destroy the Ring in the fires of the Mount of Doom. In the end... it is the fatal irony that plays itself out. Frodo finally succumbs to the temptation. But Gollum attacks Frodo and ends up with the Ring. In his delight of capturing the elusive Ring, Gollum falls into the fires of the Mount of Doom with his hands and his heart tightly wrapped around the very Ring he knew would kill him. Gollum and the Ring are destroyed. All those who inhabit Middle Earth, including Frodo and Samwise, are saved.

#### Wrestling Jacob

Our present attention this evening is on Jacob, a man who has been on a quest. This quest has been for the blessings of the covenant, a quest that has been all about Jacob. From the very outset it is obvious that Jacob believes the blessings of the covenant can be obtained

by sheer willpower and masterful cunning. The motto for his pursuit can be summed up with words that flow out of the best of human invention: “just do it”. Or to quote the one professional football team owner (out west) who best signifies this spirit: “just win, baby”.

Jacob has lived up to his given name, the one who grasps. His entire life has been marked by wrestling... Jacob was born holding Esau’s heel. He “wrestled” with Esau over a birthright and blessing, the outcome of which meant obtaining the legacy of the covenant blessings first promised to grandpa Abraham and his dad, Isaac. Most recently, Jacob has been “wrestling” with Laban, securing for himself in the process much material wealth. Jacob was known as a conniver, getting what he wanted through wit, cunning, and deception... all in his own strength for his own glory. If there was ever a picture of someone who believed and lived as if God existed solely to bless his efforts, it was Jacob.

And yes, wrestling even extended to the covenanting God of Abraham and Isaac. This is the kind of man who, in the wake of heaven -- and Coram deo – before the face of God no less, dared bargain with God with his own benefit in mind (Genesis 28:20-22). At Bethel, with angels ascending and descending the ladder from heaven, Jacob wrestled with God over the terms of his covenantal blessing, and even his material wealth. Jacob is a world-class wrestler. He will wrestle anyone, anytime, anywhere, over anything... including a potential wife. Jacob wrestles because Jacob wants to control his own destiny. Jacob wrestles because Jacob is perpetually climbing the stairway to heaven.

But all of this wrestling leaves us with a serious question: can the covenant be obtained through force? Will Jacob join Abraham and Isaac in the line of covenantal blessing by human ingenuity and constantly pursuing the upper hand and maintaining the advantage? Can Jacob wrestle the covenant from God?

## Heaven’s Intrusion

At Bethel, Jacob seemed to think so. But many years have passed since then. Jacob is parting ways with Laban; Laban has enriched Jacob. Jacob seemingly has it all. Yet he still lacks the covenantal blessing. He is outside of the land and away from his father. Now Jacob is making his exodus, having been once again visited by angels. Much has transpired since the last visit from angels at Bethel. Jacob is not left to his own devices. Heaven intervened as Jacob fled home. Now there is an intrusion from heaven once again telling Jacob to go home. And thus, Jacob’s exodus is commenced, “carrying away all of his livestock and all of his possessions”, and heading back to the promised land.

Before Jacob can enter the promised land, though, this matter of Jacob’s self-reliance must be resolved. While much has changed in the interim between Bethel and Genesis 32, not \*enough\* has changed. Jacob’s entry into the promised land necessarily means that Jacob will meet his brother for the first time in years. Already, in these early verses of chapter 32, Jacob is conniving and manipulating the situation in fear of what might happen. But Bethel has already begun to intrude again into Jacob’s life (Gen. 31:13 and 32:1-2). Jacob may have been faithless in bargaining with the Lord of the Ladder, but the Lord of the Ladder has not been unfaithful since. The “supplanter” is no longer the orchestrator of his life’s events and he knows it.

Jacob is on the brink of Canaan’s land, but once again he is confronted by angels. Just as angels ushered Jacob out of the land at Bethel, angels, much like Eden, guard the gateway back into the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and most recently, Jacob. The language of chapter 32 verse 2 is striking. Here Jacob acknowledges “this is God’s camp”, which is identical language to his Bethel experience in chapter 28, where we find him

acknowledging “this is God’s house”. While there is no conversation between the angels and Jacob, this unexpected meeting with angels is obviously jolting Jacob’s memory.

## Jacob’s “messengers”

While the angels from heaven apparently have no divine message for Jacob, in an interesting twist on the same word in Genesis 32:3, Jacob sends his own messengers to Esau. It is hard not to notice the penitence here. Always the one seeking an advantage and pursuing the upper hand, this is the first instance in which we find Jacob actually admitting his inferiority. He wants Esau to extend his favor.

The angels from God have been silent, but the messengers returning from Esau have unwelcome news. Entry into the promised land is not without difficulty, at least as Jacob perceives it. Esau has 400 men. Jacob’s response is what has been natural to him for many years: more cunning and wit. But again, it’s also hard not to notice what the decades have done to Jacob’s demeanor. As we read here of Jacob’s appeal to God in verse 9, Jacob’s self-reliance is seemingly non-existent:

## Jacob’s appeal

<sup>9</sup> Then Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: <sup>10</sup> I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant;

Verse 11:

<sup>11</sup> Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him...

Jacob is in the midst of a partial confession here. The conniving, cunning, crafty, and deceptive Jacob... the one who seemed eternally self-reliant, if not self-absorbed, is afraid. In his fear, Jacob reminds God of the Abrahamic promises made to him in the land of Laban. These words here first came from the lips of God at Bethel, “I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac”.

But even here, Jacob is invoking God’s favor in his own self-reliance. If we were to compare the last part of verse 9 and the first part of verse 12 with God’s original statement to Jacob at Beth-el, we would notice that nowhere did God promise “to treat him well”. In fact, it wasn’t God who had given that kind of promise, but it was Jacob in his bargain with God who had brought up material provisions as part of the bargain. It’s almost as if Jacob was presuming his self-centered and materialistic view of the covenant \*onto\* God.

Yet Jacob is not the man he was. Years of hard living at the expense of Laban have stripped Jacob of his former pretense. It is clear that his transformation has already begun. Jacob acknowledges that he is not worthy of God’s covenant love, a love that has loved Jacob even as he has been unlovely.

And Jacob knows this is no ordinary love. This is the second mention in scripture of the formulaic “steadfast love and faithfulness” that describes God’s covenantal favor toward His people. Jacob may have left the land of the covenant in fear of his brother years ago, but it was not Esau pursuing Jacob. God had been pursuing Jacob. Jacob thought he was striking a bargain with God at Bethel, when he said, “If God will be with me, I will come back to Bethel”. The reality is that God had kept his original promise regardless of any so-called bargain: “I AM with you and will keep you”.

Headed into the promised land and faced with the unknown of meeting his brother again, Jacob reaches out to God in apparent affirmation of Abraham's covenant. In the wake of the silence of the angels at Mahanaim who told him nothing Jacob initiates this interaction with the covenant God of Abraham and his father Isaac. Jacob is probably hoping for a "more sure word" than the one he had been given. But God is silent. If Jacob had been expecting all Bethel to break loose, especially in the wake of Mahanaim, his expectations were ingloriously unmet. There has been an intrusion from heaven... the angels. But the heavens have not parted; there has been no ladder, and there has been no glorious Lord of the ladder to talk to. The silence between Mahanaim and Peniel is deafening.

Where is God? Heaven has been inbreaking into Jacob's life again, but it is not accompanied by God's Word. What of God's promises? What of God's presence? Has Jacob squandered away the covenantal capital of Beth-El? Jacob is afraid. Jacob has invoked the covenantal promises of the patriarchs and there is nothing but deafening silence. Surely Jacob's faith is being tested. What role, if any, will self-reliance play in his securing of the promised land and his returning to his father Isaac?

## Jacob's atonement

Jacob's first responds to the silence with messengers to Esau. The first messengers tell Esau of Jacob's greatness. It is a proclamation. His second response to the silence is atonement for Esau's appeasement. In verses 13-20, the messengers are to give Esau of Jacob's greatness. Just as it seems that Jacob has wholeheartedly embraced full dependence on the God of the Covenant, he sets about to more conniving. Jacob is wrestling what he perceives to be a hostile Esau. He is contending with an image. Jacob seemingly is returning the material blessing that he had stolen from Esau. And not coincidentally, he is overly concerned about seeing Esau's face and whether Esau's face will be favorable toward him. It's almost as if favor from God that Jacob has requested is riding on Esau's countenance. Does Jacob believe that he can buy off God's favor by making restitution with his brother? If Jacob had any such designs, those plans in the following are not only challenged, but summarily destroyed.

We must note that Jacob is not completely faithless here. Note the language of verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

Jacob lodges in the camp. Whose camp is this? Jacob has already noticed the inbreaking and intrusion of heaven, though it has been quite unexpected and in not a desired fashion. Jacob has declared this "God's camp"; Mahanaim. Another Beth-el. Jacob lodges, Jacob dwells where he believes God is dwelling, if only for a moment.

## Heaven's "descent"

Jacob expects another divine encounter. Jacob expects a Ladder. But God has something else in mind for Jacob. The Lord of the Ladder does descend into the silence, but in a most unexpected way. Jacob expects glory; he expects assurance. What he gets is mystery, vulnerability, and darkness. It is no coincidence that what transpires is at night. God is about to resolve the self-centered bargain made by Jacob at Bethel. In that resolution, God is going to deal with Jacob's self-absorbed conniving. Before Jacob can enter the promised land, before he can reconcile with his brother, and before he can return to Bethel, Jacob's transformation must be complete. He cannot take self-sufficiency into the land. His

self-reliant striving must be brought to an end; his self-rule will be brought into submission to another; his self-serving resolve must be broken.

We begin now in verse 22-24a.

<sup>22</sup> And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. <sup>24</sup> Then Jacob was left alone;

Jacob is expecting a ladder. But this time there is no gateway to heaven. The ford at Jabbok is a gateway to land. Indeed, this divine meeting has no angelic glory with the LORD of hosts standing in the gateway to heaven. This gateway is utterly different. This one has an earthy feel. For Jacob, there is no sleep as he had at Bethel. There is only insomnia and loneliness. Jacob's entourage is nowhere to be found. He is as alone as he was the night of Beth-el.

## Jacob's "ascent"

Verse 24b:

and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

This is no bright, earth-shattering heaven's gate. This is the blackness of night. This is the sweat of a wrestling match with a mysterious man-figure whose identity is not cloaked in glory but humanity's darkness. Faced with the mundane rather than greatness, Jacob resorts to his old ways. Just as had been true with Esau and Laban, the stranger who meets Jacob at the gateway to the "promised" land is just another man to be wrestled with and conquered.

Verse 25:

<sup>25</sup> Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

Jacob resorts to wrestling and, true to form, Jacob prevails in his wrestling. Despite being maimed by his opponent with an apparent power that is not of this world, Jacob seemingly wins. If this has been a test of resolve, certainly Jacob has passed the test. He is ready to move on to the Promised Land and claim what is his. Once again, Jacob's self-reliance seems vindicated. Or has it been? Things aren't what they seem.

## Jacob's daybreak

Verse 26:

<sup>26</sup> And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

Funny thing about night giving way to day: the light exposes reality for what it is. As dawn breaks, the truth dawns on Jacob and his world is flipped on its head. Something has changed. The "wrestling" of verse 25 has become "not letting go" in verse 26. Such a change is not incidental. In fact, it is momentous, a defining moment in redemptive history. Jacob had been \*striving with\* the man-mysterium. Jacob pursued the upper hand looking to gain advantage. But something has changed. The striving is no more. Jacob now only clings. The one who was born with a bent to grasp everything for his own benefit is now hanging on for dear life.

What has changed? The day breaks. The day breaks. This is a most unexpected intrusion. When there was nothing but darkness, God said, let there be light... and God called the

light “day”. Jacob’s insomniac night, spent in sweaty darkness, striving with and attempting to grasp and control the man mysterium has been broken by the day. The day breaks and Jacob no longer seeks the advantage.

Why would daybreak have such a life-changing impact on Jacob? The mysterious “man-figure” is no mere man. And Jacob knows it. Hosea tells us that Jacob strove with THE angel, the angel of the Lord who frequently appears throughout the Old Testament as God in human form.

This is the Lord of the Ladder with whom he has been wrestling! This is the Son of man whose glory transcends and transverses heaven and earth (see John 1:51). The Lord of hosts has come to earth and the all-glorious concedes defeat in humanity. Despite having the power to maim Jacob’s strength and reduce him to nothing, the mysterious man allows Jacob to seemingly prevail. Jacob has bested the Lord of the Ladder. But it is not Jacob who is the ultimate victor. It is not a good thing to wrestle with God and win.

## Jacob’s desperation

Verse 26b:

But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!”

The one who has moved from pursuing a position of advantage and power to a desperate clinging of one who is in need of divine favor now speaks from a changed heart. The conniving is nowhere to be found; these lips of Jacob’s express transformed motivation. The prospect of the mysterious divine-man-figure leaving the scene without blessing Jacob is more than a now broken and contrite Jacob can bear. For the one who is “undone” face to face with the Holy, a departure without blessing is unthinkable.

## Jacob’s transformation

Jacob’s transformation is complete. This is the end of Jacob. There will be no more wrestling. Only clinging. The divine intrusion into Jacob’s life, via submission of the mysterious man in “conflict”, moves Jacob from wrestling to clinging. The divine touch on his life emanating groin has not merely robbed him of physical strength. Jacob’s knowledge of the holy exhausts him of his willpower. Jacob realizes it is only by grace that he has only been maimed. This man-mysterium could have taken his life; instead, Jacob is graciously given life and life more abundantly.

No longer is Jacob attempting to impose his will on God. He is no longer reminding the covenanting God of promised blessing. He is no longer imposing material gain onto the covenant. Gone is the cocksure attitude that would bargain Coram deo with the Lord of the Ladder. Now he is clinging to the Lord of the Ladder for blessing, even if it costs him his life. It is the clinging of the spiritually bankrupt at the end of himself crying out the only hope he has: “Bless me or I die”.

Jacob’s new eyes recognize that the wrestling man is both antagonist and Savior. The Lord of hosts has humbled himself; in conceding defeat, he wins Jacob’s salvation. And Jacob’s desperation of faith is that of Job’s: “though he slay me, I will still hope in Him”.

Jacob clings to and cries out to the only Person who can save him. The covenant-making God who keeps all of his promises now notes Jacob’s favored status.

## Man-mysterium's blessing

Verse 27:

<sup>27</sup> So He said to him, "What *is* your name?" He said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup> And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

The man-"mysterium" first responds to Jacob's plea with a question in a manner reminiscent of the Son of Man who invariably would ask a question in these kinds of situations. The question here is meant to illicit a confession from Jacob (compare the confession of Legion in Mark 5:9): what is your name? With the mouth confession is made, and a repentant Jacob speaks a one-word confession that summarizes life long self-gratification and self-sufficiency: "Jacob". At the end of himself, Jacob confesses who he is to the One who already knows. Jacob acknowledges in one word to the Lord of the ladder that his life has been the life of the supplanter, even to the point of naively believing that the covenant promises could be secured through betrayal and deception. The supplanter has foolishly assumed that God could be bargained with... and worse, that God's favor could be bought. Jacob is a sinner, a fool who has lived life in the wisdom of man. Now clinging to man-mysterium, Jacob confesses his only hope of life lies in the One to whom he clings.

The second response from the man-mysterium is to change Jacob's name. In the Son of Man who stood at the top of the ladder at Bethel (John 1:51), Jacob receives grace and life. This life-giving Son of man gives Jacob a new name, and with the new name, a new identity. Jacob will no longer be known as a conniver, but as one who, in desperation, held on to the Lord of the ladder at the risk of his life. Jacob is no longer known as a supplanter, but as one who clings to the covenant God because it is only in Him that any covenant blessing will be found.

And that brings us to the third response from the man mysterium. This response is what Jacob had been pursuing his whole life.

And He blessed him there.

And He blessed him there.

Jacob now knows that the covenant blessings cannot be obtained through material means. One cannot weasel his way into the blessings. They cannot be clutched by pursuing an advantage over men. One cannot buy his way in. This is the end of the line for one who slaughtered a lamb and then donned the skins himself in order to steal the covenant blessing. There will be no more bargaining with God over material gain. Jacob now understands what grandpa Abraham understood: "and Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." The covenant blessings can be had only by faith alone in the One alone who can grant those blessings by grace alone. Jacob now knows that the kind of faith through which the covenant blessings come is completely void of self-reliance. This faith understands that the true meaning of Beth-el is not material gain... it is not in what the Lord of the ladder will do for him, but in the grand covenant promise that God will dwell with him and keep him... that the purpose of the ladder isn't to rise up to God, but is God descending to the covenant recipient so that relationship and fellowship might take place. That faith clings to the covenanting Lord of the ladder even if it means

death. The insomnia of an entire life wrestled with God finds its rest in the Lord of the ladder's blessing.

## Jacob's response

Jacob has one response, the only response, to such a blessing.

<sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Jacob had been desiring to see his brother's face, hoping to see a countenance of favor extended. But he gets much more than he bargained for. Favor with God does not come through favor with men. In fact, Jacob learns that it is true favor with men is only possible through God's favor graciously granted to a recipient of mercy. The significance of entry into the promised land, for Jacob, is not about seeking the face of men, but about seeing the face of God. And the full weight of that reality is not lost on Jacob. Jacob does not have the Sinai experience in which God has emphatically stated that no one may look on him and live. He does not see the veil erected between the inner sanctum of God's dwelling with His people on earth and the rest of their sacrificial worship. Like Adam, who walked in the cool of the garden with his Creator, Jacob has been in the presence of the Lord of hosts who stood at the top of the ladder in the throne room of heaven so many years ago. Twice, Jacob has been to the gate of heaven. And twice, he has lived to tell about it. Jacob still lives because the covenanting God of Israel is a gracious and merciful God. Instead of the destruction and damnation that Jacob deserves, he has been given abundant life by the Lord of the ladder, the source of life.

## The New Day

And finally, verse 31:

<sup>31</sup> Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

For Jacob, the one who has seen God face to face and lived, this is a new day. Daybreak gives way to the full sight of the sun. The last time the sun went down, Jacob was conniving to get into the promised land. By the time the sun comes up, he has a new name, a new identity, a new destiny. The rhythm of redemptive history, the darkness that must give way to light, has finally become Jacob's own story. The sun comes up and Jacob is no longer Jacob, but Israel. This is a new day and the beginnings of a new people. Every time Jacob limps he will be reminded of the new day, the new name, the new identity that is only found in the Lord of the ladder.

And the man mystery? As the night fades, so too does this man who wrestled with Jacob. The fullness of time has not yet come. Even though a new day has dawned for Jacob, redemptive history still remains cloaked in darkness.

The end of this story finds itself in the Lord of the ladder, Jesus Christ, who in pre-  
incarnate form secured not only Jacob's salvation and covenant destiny, but ours as well. **Conclusion**  
Jacob's destiny is our destiny in Christ. There is an allusion to this story in the New Testament, even as Paul is addressing those true descendents of the man who wrestled with God and lived to tell about it. Romans 11:26-27:

<sup>26</sup> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; <sup>27</sup> For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

This is one of the only times that Paul uses Jacob's original name. Through the prophet Isaiah, whom Paul is quoting here, Paul understands the redemptive implications of what happened that night. This night at the ford of Jabbok, the Lord of the ladder both turned away ungodliness from Jacob and the forgiveness or taking away of Jacob's sins. Like Abram, more is at stake for Jacob in the covenant than simply entry into the land of promise or the promise of material blessing. In the Jacob who clings to the man-mysterium at the risk of his life, Paul sees the positive and negative blessings of the covenant being applied to the covenant recipient. Jacob's sins have been taken away by the Redeemer who has descended the ladder from Zion. And ungodliness is turned away in imputed righteousness. And in that moment, Paul sees not merely Jacob's ethnic descendents, but the church who has had her sins taken away and has had her ungodliness replaced with a godliness that comes from the Redeemer to whom she clings.

The implications for us are huge. Gollum is a creature with whom we have empathy because we know we are too often just like him. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are sooooo seductive. We know the fruit is deadly poison. And yet we pursue it, catch it, and grasp it to our destruction anyway. We spend a lot of time wrapping our hearts around those things which, in the evil irony, have as their aim our downfall. We cling, we hold onto, we grasp that which will kill us. There are some things we just will not let go.

We are the connivers. We live for the triumph of the moment in pursuing advantage over others. We live by "a theology of glory" as if God's kingdom on earth can be secured by force, by human effort, and by human ingenuity. Yet just as God will not allow us to continue in our ways, in his grace and mercy he will confront us as the Lord of the ladder to rid us of our self-dependence and self-reliance at Peniel.

There will be a Peniel event in our lives because the Man Mysterium doesn't simply disappear into the night. While darkness eventually set over Israel, over the course of redemptive history, Israel's descendents gave rise to the Son of Man Incarnate, the new Israel in whom heaven and earth meet. The Lord of the Ladder shed his mystery and descended the ladder at night, surrounded by the angels of glory. The Lord of those hosts took upon himself flesh forever. The man-mysterium has been revealed for the ages to be the Image of God, Jesus Christ. In humility and suffering he conceded defeat, and in that defeat won salvation for his people. His defeat, albeit short-lived, is our victory. Our striving, our wrestling with God in the theology of glory has been brought to its end at the cross in the Son of Man's death. Our Peniel confrontation has its grounds in the cross. It is at the cross we find our covenant blessing. It is in the death of the cross that we die to any advantage we would seek over others. It is in the cross where we find our identities for the new day that has dawned over us.

Thus, a new day dawns for the church. Christ, both Son of Man and New Israel, gives grace and life to the spiritually bankrupt. Israel is now a name and identity forever borne by those who would cling to the Son of Man at the expense of their own lives. With a new name and new identity, we have been brought into the new creation, an abundant life that flows with milk and honey from the king's table.

Oh, may we see ourselves at the river of Jabbok. May we cling to the one no longer the man-mysterium but the Lord of the ladder, Jesus Christ. It is at the river of Jabbok, it is at the cross we must cling to Christ for the salvation of our souls. It is only in him that we find our conniving, our supplanting, our pursuit of the advantage over others forgiven forever. And it is only in the Lord of the ladder we find that righteousness necessary to see God and live to tell about it. We cling to so many things that cannot save us. We hang on

to so many things that cannot give us rest for our souls. Even as we are tempted to hang on to those things this week, may we see the beauty and the wonder of the Lord of the ladder and cling to him.

Blessed are those at the end of themselves who prefer death to letting go of the Son of Man. As we cling to our only hope of life, may our desperate plea forever be: bless us or we die.