

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2020 (176 Years)



Week of July 19th

We will continue sending out this combination of the newsletter and bulletin to keep you up to date on announcements, prayers, needs and scheduled activities for those that are uncomfortable to attend service yet.

Included will be the usual newsletter information along with prayers, scripture and a sermon.

We hope that you can utilize this format to keep up to date while being away from actual services, meetings, activities and watching the online sermon.

Please be in prayer for the end of the coronavirus and healing for those affected by it.



Bedford Presbyterian Church
serving Christ since 1844

A Biblically Guided Christian Community,

Loving God, Loving Others,

Serving the World & Growing Disciples

You may want to read Genesis 31-33 before service begins.

The Approach to God

Prelude

“Prelude and Fugue in G Minor”

Bach

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: And Also with you

Welcome and Announcements

- Please remember that when the Prelude begins the service is being recorded. We ask that you please refrain from talking when the service starts, as conversation can be heard on the recording.
- Something More will resume August 4th
- Any other announcements are printed at the back of this bulletin.

Call to Worship:

One: Come, all who are weary and heavy-laden –

All: For God promises the gift of rest and renewal.

One: Come all who are weighed down by sin, regrets and fears –

All: For God promises the gift of hope and new possibilities.

Introit

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

Praise Team

Prayer of Confession:

This is the day that You have made, Lord. Help us to rejoice in it and be glad! Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as Your people. To come to You in these moments, to confess our sins, to receive forgiveness and give it, to pray and sing and listen, to renew our fainting spirits, to rest in all Your promises. Open our eyes to see You, Lord. Open our ears to hear Your Word. Visit us through Your Holy Spirit and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: (1 John 3:18)

(The apostle John wrote to us ...) Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

(response)

One: Brothers and Sisters believe the good news

All: In Christ Jesus, we have been forgiven and born again to new life.

Gloria

“Glory Be to the Father”

Proclaiming the Word of God

Time for all God's Children

Special Music

"Through It All"

Praise Team

Scripture: Genesis 32: 1-13

Sermon: Wrestling with God (Genesis 31-33)

A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell over. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff. So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something. **"HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there? HELP!**

After a while he heard a voice.

- "Jack, Jack. Can you hear me?"
- "Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"
- "I can see you, Jack. You are going to be alright."
- "Yes, but . . . Who are you, and where are you?"
- "I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."
- "The Lord? You mean, GOD?"
- "That's Me."
- "God, please help me! I promise if You'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."
- "Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's just get you down from there; then we can talk. Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully."
- "I'll do anything, Lord. Just tell me what to do."
- **"Okay. Let go of the branch."**
- "What?"
- "I said, let go of the branch. Just trust Me. Let go."

There was a long silence. Finally Jack yelled, **"Help! Help! is anyone ELSE up there?"**
(source unknown)

Have you ever felt like Jack? We say that we want to trust God with our life, but when we find out how difficult life may become – even with God's promised help – we can't handle it and try to look elsewhere.

When God says, "Let go of the things that stand between you and Me, and trust Me with your life," it sounds pretty scary. But when we do let go, we find freedom and safety in His hands as you learn that God can truly be trusted with every part of your life . . . but, like Jacob, sometimes you may have to personally wrestle with God for a while until you come to your senses.

Today, we are taking a final look at the life of Jacob. The humble man whom God now instructs to return home is far different from the spoiled young swindler who had to run away twenty years earlier. Jacob has learned the value of hard, honest, work. He has also learned that he has been

blessed and protected from harm by God throughout these twenty years of his exile in which he had gathered not only a large family but also wealth sufficient to care for them all.

So when God calls for him to go and promises to bring him safely back home, why does Jacob now seem so fearful of doing so? I offer as an answer that faith is easy when the demands are little, but when faced with a fiery furnace, or giants in the land, or your possibly still angry brother headed your way with 400 horsemen..... that's when you learn whether or not your faith in God is complete.

Since this particular story spans three Biblical chapters, the only way I can tell it is by summarizing and commenting while reading some the highlights from the episode. But I have also given you these chapters of Genesis in a handout so that you can track along with me now and read it again for yourself later

[READERS NOTE: Church attendees were given a handout of Genesis chapters 31-33. Those of you reading this sermon only have highlighted portions.]

Let's begin with God twice telling Jacob that it is time to go home.

*31:1 Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's; he has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." 2And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as favorably as he did before. 3Then the LORD said to Jacob, "**Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.**" 4So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was, 5and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me as favorably as he did before. **But the God of my father has been with me.***

6You know that I have served your father with all my strength; 7yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me.

In his conversation with Leah and Rachel, Jacob also reveals that having had an earlier dream, this is actually the second time God has both reminded him of His promised protection and told him to get going NOW!

13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth."

Rachel and Leah agree that they are also ready to go, since their father Laban has only treated them like property to be sold and then spent all their dowry money on himself. Perhaps, her intention to regain some of their lost inheritance is also the reason why before they depart, Rachel secretly steals Laban's family idols - which are usually made of gold - (basically she raided the family bank account).

Why did Jacob have to be twice told to go, and even then waiting for Laban to be out of camp before sneaking away? Because, as he explained once his angry father-in-law caught up with them, that he feared Laban would try to keep his daughters, his grandchildren, and send Jacob away empty handed (cf. verses 31:31 & 42). Even with God's previously proven and promised future protection for a safe return back home, Jacob still feared Laban more than he trusted God.

But then we hear from his own words that Jacob had real reasons to fear Laban had not God intervened by personally warning Laban not to harm Jacob. Laban said...

29 It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.

43 ..."The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about their children whom they have borne?"

Thus heeding God's warning, Laban lets Jacob and all his possessions go unharmed. The two men set up a boundary marker over which they both pledge not to cross with the intent of harming the other. They also take an oath which has come to be known as **the Mizpah blessing:**

"May the Lord watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. "

Today you can find this "blessing" written in cards and even engraved on wedding rings... when in reality it was not meant to be a heartwarming sentiment but rather an agreement between two people who could not trust each other.

*48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he called it Galeed, 49 and the pillar **Mizpah**, for he said, 50 If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me."*

That evening they shared a meal and the next morning Laban rose up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them; then he departed and returned home.

With his fearful meeting with Laban now – as promised with God's assistance – safely resolved, Jacob next needs to figure out how to face his brother, but before he does that, God gives him another spectacular assurance of His divine protection. Chapter 32 opens with Jacob receiving an amazing vision.

*32:1 **Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; 2 and when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp! [God's Army]. "***

What could this vision mean other than God showing Jacob that he and his family were surrounded by God's protection and they need not fear any human harm.

So with this added confidence Jacob next sends a letter to his brother stating that

- he was coming home and that
- he was giving back to Esau his stolen blessing (this is indicated in verse 4 by Jacob calling his brother "**my lord Esau**" and referring to himself as "**your servant Jacob.**")
- He also indicates that he has earned enough wealth on his own so that he wasn't looking for any of the family inheritance and
- perhaps now we can let bygones be bygones and live together in peace.

But with the messengers return so also comes Jacob's fears. The messengers reported,

*"We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 **Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed;** and he divided the people that were*

with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, 8thinking, "If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape."

After sending half of his people and property into hiding, Jacob then prays one of the most beautiful and heartfelt prayers recorded in the Bible; remembering God's previous and promised future blessings – including making his descendants like the sand of the sea; which would be hard to do – he reminds God – if Esau now kills them all.

*⁹And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and **I will do you good,**'¹⁰ **I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant,** for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. ¹¹**Deliver me, please,** from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; **he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children.** ¹²Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.'"*

For twenty years, Jacob has both experienced and been personally assured of God's continuing protection. He has even seen God's protecting army and yet, still fearing his brother, Jacob once again resorts to scheming up ways to protect as much of his family as possible.

Apparently, still unconvinced of God's ability to protect his family, Jacob decides to shower Esau with gifts, in this case 550 head of livestock - sheep, goats, camels, cows, and donkeys – which if accomplishing nothing else would at least slow Esau's approach and diminish his ability to launch a surprise attack against Jacobs camp.

Still fearing such an attack, Jacob next puts his family and everything else he had in camp on the opposite side of the river and spends the night alone waiting for Esau to arrive. But to his surprise it is not Esau but God Himself who now decides to go a few rounds with Jacob. This is one of the strangest episodes in the Bible.

24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25When 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. 26Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

We don't know who this man was: perhaps an opportunistic thief, an angel, or God himself – which is who Jacob thought he was fighting – as he indeed had been striving with God and man for his whole life. So the name given in blessing was most appropriate for the life he had lived up until now.... But it also signified that Jacob was a changed person. Jacob is now someone who has prevailed against both humans and in some way even with God. He has become someone who can now bravely face even a fast approaching brother with 400 horesmen. Which is what happens next.

In the morning, limping exhausted back into camp and seeing Esau's approach (a big cloud of dust with a lot of bleating sheep and lowing cattle), Jacob bravely puts his family in formation for a formal presentation and then stands in front of them to meet his brother. Still working his plan, as Esau pulls up, Jacob begins bowing – seven times face to the ground – but like the father with his prodigal son, Esau doesn't even let Jacob finish before pulling him up in a bear hug with the two formerly estranged brothers kissing and weeping together over the twenty lost years.

Esau then tries to give all the livestock back, but Jacob insists, “**I have everything I want,**” so his brother should keep the gift (remember Jacob still has another half of his herds and holdings hidden behind a hill) and while no longer fearing Esau but perhaps still wary of him or 400 his riders, Jacob also refuses any escort. He really need not have feared them anyway because he now knew that he traveled with the best protection possible, God Himself keeping His promise to bring Jacob safely home.

*16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.... 18 [While] Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, ... where he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for one hundred pieces of money the plot of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 **There he erected an altar and called it “El-Elohe-Israel” [God is the God of Israel].***

With his changed name, Jacob now boldly tells the world the source of all his blessings.

The next sadness in Jacob's life will be in a few years' time with the loss of his beloved Rachel while birthing their twelfth son Benjamin. But the happy conclusion to this chapter in his life finds Jacob eventually settling back at the place he had originally named **Bethel – the house of the Lord**, where God first promised His protection for this wandering trickster – and where now we assume the man known as Israel, “One who has wrestled with God,” began offering back to God that promised tithe for having kept him in food, clothing and in bringing him safely back home.

What then should you take home from this tale?

Chapter 11, the faith chapter in the letter to the Hebrews opens with this assertion.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ... And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

(verses 1-2, 6)

Then it begins listing out great men of faith from the earliest of times.

- There is Enoch, who preached the gospel and boldly warned of the impending flood.
- There is Noah, who by faith built the ark which safely brought his family through the flood.
- There is Abraham, who followed God's voice to the promised land and who even offered up his only son at God's command
- There is Isaac, who in faith willing submitted
- And yes there is also Jacob, who when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, ‘bowing in worship over the top of his staff.’

The story of Jacob, the “Heel Grabber,” ending his life as Israel, one who had wrestled with both man and god and prevailed, is one of a hard fought faith and proof that God can be trusted with every aspect of your life.

What cliff are you still hanging from, what band of 400 horsemen do you fear? Why don't you hand them all over to God and let his angels surround you. You are going to be alright.

Let's pray about this.

Response to the Word of God

Hymn

“My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness”

Praise Team

Affirmation of Faith

Celtic Creed

We believe in God above us, maker and sustainer of all life, of sun and moon, of water and earth, of male and female. We believe in God beside us, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, born of woman, servant of the poor, tortured and nailed to a tree. A man of sorrows, He died forsaken. He descended into the earth to the place of death. On the third day He rose from the tomb. He ascended into heaven, to be everywhere present and His kingdom will come on earth. We believe in God within us, the Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire, life-giving breath of the Church, Spirit of healing and forgiveness, source of resurrection and of eternal life. Amen.

Doxology

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer

Can what we bring to this time of offering really heal a broken world? Can our hour of prayer and song transform our hearts and minds to doing Your work in the world? In faith, we trust that we can and we will. Bless now our intentions and our offerings, Holy God. Bless now our lives and our commitments. By Your Spirit, reform our lives into ones worthy of the task You place before us. In the spirit of Jesus our Christ, we pray.

Now let us pray together the prayer our Lord taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

The Sending Forth

Benediction

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20)

Postlude

“The Acts of God are Righteousness”

Walther

Joys- July 19th

Joy that Barbara Nichols' daughter and family have moved here
Joy to see Russell S. and Ellen F. back in church

Concerns- July 19th

Barnes: Kim Hedrick- (friend) health issues
Benton: Linda Crawford- (friend) cancer, struggling with chemo
Blair: James Thorne- (scout) rare skin infection, doing better
Katy Neel- (LHS student) scleroderma
Glen Murgacz- (friend) biopsy for bladder cancer
Boone: Jim Hedrick - (friend) recovering from partial lung removal
Michael -(son) out of work during pandemic
Ray Graeber- (Sammy's cousin)- recovering from colon surgery
Nancy Boone- (Sammy's cousin's wife) cancer
Chryssikos: Linda Arendt- (neighbor) disabled
Clarke: Ben Daniels - (Pat's grandson) deployed to Syria late summer
Cram: Winslow's-(friends of Sally) family & medical problems
Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care
Mary Keys- (friend) ICU, blood infection, heart problems, stroke
Military away from home
DeWitt: Terry Sharp- (cousin) ceases chemo treatment- hospice
Diddams: Lois- problems with medications
Paul (brother)- loss of wife, not doing well
Dills: Katy Neel- lymphoma
Fleming: family dealing with addiction and self- esteem
Steve Trombecky- (friend) home recovering
Political leaders to never close churches again
Foster: Joyce Abbott- (former member) cancer
Andre Nemenek- (Shepherds table cook) prostate cancer
Ellen- doing well
Betty Dudek- home
Glass: Ken (Steve Glass' father) fell, broke hip and shoulder
Goodman: Barry Owen-(friend) cancer
Randall Sales-(SRHS coach) cancer
Katherine Saunders- (Hugh's daughter) hospice
Gould: Jay- home, recovering from heart bypass surgery
Harris: Judy- recovering from throat procedure
Heinrich: Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder
Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems
Koch: Doris- wearing heart monitor
Kuhn- Kibbey: Nancy Milton- (friend) cancer, Alzheimer's
Dot- idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, wet macular degeneration
Grandson- alcoholism

Ledden: John- heart problems

Mauser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems

Steven-(son's boss) going blind

Tom & Betty Clark- downsizing, and Betty has new pacemaker

Norma Jean- (Gayle's sister) broken collar bone

Pat- (Al's sister) diabetes, tested positive for Covid-19

Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders

Forensic scientists who deal with crime

Rev. Pam Ledbetter-(friend) home, doing well

Doris Jean Coble- (cousin) in nursing home

Neal & Win Holland- in Australia, whole family has Covid

Salley: David Etheridge- (fellow pastor) terminal cancer

Emily Salley- (sister-in-law) invasive breast cancer, mastectomy

Saunders: (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)

Scott- (son-in-law) chemo and radiation

Scheurer: Jim Hedrick-(friend) cancer, partial lung removed

Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems

Toney: Judy- finished radiation

Karen Hyde-(friend) bladder cancer

Mike Gillespie-passed away, prayers for family

Cal Rice- (former pastor) bone cancer, refused treatment

Van Dyke: Thomas Blythe- (friend) surgery next two Thursdays to clean out heart assist pump

Pat Blythe-(Thomas' wife)- agoraphobia

Wilkerson: Ricky Wilkerson-(Dan's cousin) cancer

Prayers for those dealing with loneliness

Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation

Prayers for an end of the coronavirus and healing for those infected

Prayers for our divided country and the violence occurring

Prayers to speak and listen to those who are different

Re-gathering guidelines

For the foreseeable future, worship services will be designed to limit the spread of this virus. Please note the following guidelines.

1. If you have a pre-existing medical condition, if you feel sick, or if you believe you may have been exposed to the virus, PLEASE STAY HOME for at least 2 weeks while continuing to worship with us through the video broadcast.
2. Unless you need the elevator, please enter the church through the front door.
3. Wear a face mask while entering and leaving the church. Courtesy face masks – disposable and permanent for you to take home – are available at each entrance.
4. Upon entering, place your offering (regular & 5¢ a meal) in the plates or baskets at each entrance. If you want a Daily Bread booklet or if communion is to be served, pick these up as you go to your seat.
5. Let the ushers guide you to socially distanced seating, where bulletins are placed. Take seats closer to the front and let latecomers sit further back.
6. Go directly to your seats to quietly enjoy the prelude music. Save your greetings and conversations with fellow members for AFTER THE SERVICE when you can safely do so OUTSIDE.
7. During the service, please just listen to the music or sing quietly to yourself.
8. Children will stay with their family, there will be no nursery, no gathering for children's sermon, and no children's church.
9. If you must use the restroom, wash your hands thoroughly.
10. After the service, please let Ushers dismiss you from your seats (moving from back to front)
11. After the service, please linger on the lawn, while wearing your face mask, where you can greet and visit with fellow worshippers.
12. Use a non-touch way of greeting fellow worshippers before and after the service.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Thank you for continuing to send in your contributions and pledges.
You can mail your pledge or contribution or you can drop by the office,
Mon-Thurs between 8 am -4pm.**

Even though we aren't meeting as normal, **5 ¢ a meal offerings and Heifer** are still welcomed and encouraged. Just mail them in as you do your pledges and contributions, with a note in the memo line.

Do you enjoy yardwork? If you do, we are looking for volunteers to work in the church yard mowing grass, weed eating and doing general yard work. If you are interested, please let the office know.

Something More will resume meeting on August 4th at 4:30 pm, by ZOOM or in person.

Happy Birthday!!

Chris Dills- 20th

Nancy Van Dyke- 22nd

August Birthdays

Fred Scheurer - 2

Pat Clarke - 4

Tinkie Avery -10

Dorinda Hopkins-13

Edith Weeks -17

Ann Fowler -27

William Hopkins -29

August Anniversaries

John & Betty Salley -2

Ron & Barbara Saunders - 6

Barry & Tricia Schubert -7

Lester & Helen Heinrich -10

**WEAR
YOUR
MASK**

