

Genesis 32:22-31, NIV

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. <sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,<sup>[a]</sup> because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." <sup>29</sup> Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel,<sup>[b]</sup> saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." <sup>31</sup> The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,<sup>[c]</sup> and limped because of his hip.

### Sermon "Overcoming Your Wrestling"

We often have times when we are confronted with wrestling, and sometimes it's wrestling we don't want to face, and we try to do all we can to avoid the challenges. Wrestling is tussling, going back and forward. We tend to go back and forward, trying to decide what we should do and how to keep away from what we think is about to happen or what we assume will take place. We often tussle and tussle until we get tired and start worrying, having doubts and fears. We are human, and we don't like struggling. We don't like wrestling with complex and challenging situations. Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever done this? If you have, let me tell you how to overcome your wrestling and your struggling.

Let me tell you about a man who had many struggles and hardships. His name is Jacob. According to our text, Jacob is on a journey of wrestling that started in his mother's womb. When he was born, Jacob wasn't alone. He was born with a twin brother named Esau. Jacob and Esau tussled with each other before they were born. As they came of age, Jacob deceived Esau, the oldest, and took his birthright. And from that moment onward, Jacob ran to get away to save his life. Esau was outraged and went looking for him and was determined to find His brother. Jacob then became a man on the run. Our story for today tells us that Jacob had been on the run for quite a while. He ran first to stay with his uncle Laban, which marked the beginning of his troubles. Because of harsh mistreatment, Jacob left his father-in-law, Laban. he took his family and all the livestock and left.

Although Jacob was on the run, he wasn't left alone. God was with him to guide him along the way. God had instructed Jacob to return home, back to his people. And at the time, he received the message that his brother Esau was looking for him and had four hundred men. When Jacob heard that, he became afraid, gathered his family, and traveled to a river called Jabbok. When Jacob arrived, he sent his family, the livestock, and all he had ahead of him across the river. Let's listen to the story:

- Came to a ford of the river called Jabbok
- Sent family across the stream
- Jacob was left alone – afraid, worried, and prayed
- An angelic man came and wrestled with Jacob until daybreak
- The man couldn't overcome or beat Jacob and touched the socket of his hip
- The man said to Jacob: "Let me go; for it daybreak
- Then Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

- the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel because you struggle with God and with man and have overcome.”
- Jacob said again, “Please tell me your name.”
- The man said, “Why do you ask my name? Then he blessed Jacob.

This story should be very encouraging because it shows that we can overcome our struggles. The struggles can come from our doings or others. However, they come, and we often find ourselves tussling back and forward, trying to find peace, trying to find understanding. And, despite how we may feel or go through, we can always come to God. We can come to Him for comfort, guidance, and solitude. Wrestling is a normal part of our lives, whether we want it or not. We learned to live with them. We learned to overcome them. In our wrestling, we can find strength. We can find faith and endurance. Jacob separated himself from his family and was left alone to meditate and pray. In doing that, he found assurance. He saw God face to face, the God of his fathers, Abraham. and Isaac, who prepared Jacob to face his wrongs and to be forgiven. Not only did he find forgiveness, but Jacob received a blessing. God bless Jacob or equip him to meet his brother, Esau. This story says a lot to us. It says we should always trust God even when we don't understand or see it. We must continue to believe that God can do the impossible. He can prepare us to face our challenges. He can open a door and can make a way.

Yes, Jacob was left alone to be with the Lord to deal with his thoughts and feelings as he prepared to face Esau. I can imagine him wrestling, weeping, and praying. And God came to his rescue. Like Jacob, we struggle with issues and situations and feel outdone. At times, we feel burdened and worried. We sometimes feel as though all hope is gone, and then suddenly, the Lord appears, and we don't feel alone anymore. God is our refuge and strength. He is our help in troubling times, daunting moments, and hours of despair. Jacob prevailed against the angel so

he would be prepared to make amends with his brother. God can also prepare us. I don't know what you are going through. I don't know what you may face along the way. But I believe God will take care of you. I believe He will also take care of me. I once talked with a lady who lost faith in God. Her husband passed away, and she stopped believing in the Lord. In talking with her, I was able to encourage and give her support. I helped Sally to get an understanding of God's presence even in the loss of her loved one. And she slowly began to accept God in a personal way.

No matter who we are, and no matter what we go through, we all have low moments and challenging times and can quickly feel abandoned. When we have experiences that make us feel less than we want to feel, we must look beyond ourselves and look to God. God promised never to leave us, not forsake us. He promised to be with us always. Let's trust the Lord. Let's keep our faith in Him. He was with Jacob and blessed him. He will also help us when we can't help ourselves. He can help us to prevail, overcome, and be steadfast in our faith. Therefore, we must keep our trust in the Lord.

In final thought, our wrestling will come and go in many ways. There will be times when we will feel aggravated and frustrated. There will be times when we will get tired and outdone and feel alone. We will have to struggle and tussle, pushing back and forward. Jacob's wrestling reminds us that we aren't alone in our wrestling. Our wrestling can strengthen us to face challenges even when they are complicated. Our wrestling can lead to renewed strength, renewed faith, and courage. When we wrestle and endure, we can face or confront our circumstances and find joy, peace, hope, and, most of all, love. So, I say to you, keep the faith and trust in the Lord as you go through your wrestling because a better day and a better way will come. Amen.