

A stream, a creek, most of you might have memories playing around a creek as a child, or fishing it, camping near it. Perhaps you've adventures to speak of, stories to tell, but know well the story of one day, when your father was at a creek. Your father Jacob. The brook there at Jabbok. God confronts Jacob. To teach him. That Jacob would leave that place, the same way that you would leave this place today.

Jacob was preparing to wrestle Esau again, whom he'd stolen the birthright many years earlier. He won that wrestling match. But now Esau was coming at Him with an army, 100s of armed men. Could Jacob beat him again? That night the strangest thing happened. A man wrestled with Jacob all night long. It was the Angel of the Lord. Jesus Himself. Wrestling with Jacob. What a struggle! Why did God do this? To teach Jacob a story, a lesson he'd never forget -that all of his life, as Jacob had been struggling, wrestling with his family, his father, his brother, his relative- he had really all along been wrestling with God.

Isn't that true for us? We wrestle with things in this life, but isn't it God whom we're really struggling with? He desires to lead us in the way of truth, to live, act as His people should; so often we choose the path most appealing to our sinful flesh. Wrestle with how He doesn't answers prayers the way we want, doesn't fix things the way we want, doesn't do what we think best, wrestle with how He takes care of things in our life. We wrestle with what we want, and with our family, our children, is it not God who is the real opponent? Just as with Jacob, He will not give up on you.

After that night, Jacob is forever changed. He gave up on His will in exchange for Thy will be done. He came to meet Esau, with humble spirit.

He learned to embrace the promises of God and not let go. Even with his hip out of joint, Jacob hung on. He pinned God to the floor. **Let me go**, God said, but Jacob said, **Not unless you bless me**. Now come on, how could a mere mortal pin God? He's almighty; no weaknesses. Because God wanted Jacob to see His compassion, to receive His blessings. God changed his name that night to Israel: **he who contends, strives, with God and prevails**. God's beloved people would forever be called the children of Israel.

And this is of you. You are beloved of Him. Not to wrestle with the things of this world or your neighbors but to contend with God according to His word. To embrace His promises by faith. That regardless of what comes against you in life, He will use it all for your good, you prevail- not of Your perseverance or efforts, you don't prevail by earthly measures, but prevail in His compassion, gifts forgiveness, life He gives, because in a brook of

baptismal waters you are marked, like Jacob you are named by Him, given His blessing. You are forever changed.

That parable Jesus told. Never underestimate a widow: she may be elderly, poor, perhaps bad health, but never count her out. She may not have the physical strength of Jacob, but has every bit of his endurance, determined to prevail, she wouldn't give up. Her constant demand for justice finally caused the judge to give in; he couldn't take her any longer.

Jesus says to His disciples, **What don't you get?** If this unrighteous, crooked judge who had absolutely no respect for God or man is capable of (at last!) giving this Widow justice she sought, will your own righteous, loving Father ignore the very cries of His own elect? Will the Son be sacrificed so that injustice will prevail? Will blood be spilled so that cries can be ignored? Will a just God allow injustices to prevail among his own children? Will you ever be left alone? No, not a chance.

Jesus asked, **when I come back to earth, will I find faith?** True faith, the gift, that looks to Christ alone. That does not lose hope despite what you see in your life and the world. A faith that knows regardless of what happens to you, it will be good. For He is good. And You are His.

He told them a parable that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. How often we fail to speak to pray and lose heart so quickly. Repent. We wonder, why doesn't God just _____ (fill in the blank). Who wouldn't like prayer answered instantly? Who wants to wait for justice? Who doesn't get tired of crying out? Get tired of asking over and over and over again. Get frustrated with God. That's *not* faith, that God must prove Himself by things you can see.

How can you ever despair or lose heart? Jesus doesn't speak here to say "You're terrible at prayer, you'd better start doing a better job if you want to be my child!" it might be very true, you're terrible at prayer—it's difficult; the devil, your sinful flesh constantly trying to distract you from it. But Jesus doesn't speak to berate you. He speaks **do not lose heart**, that you continue to call upon God and trust in His help, no matter what.

How can you doubt our Father who gave His Son in love to redeem you, who sent His Spirit of grace into your live, who made you His child, will not hear the cries of His own dear child? The widow had an unrighteous judge; you have a heavenly Father. He delights to hear, answer your prayers. Answer far greater than your thoughts or imagination. Always for your good. Regardless of what you experience. **Do not lose heart**, dear child. You prevail with His blessings. You have a righteous Judge who's working for you, declares you holy by His blood, His works counts as yours. And He is coming back for you. Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly.