

**Anglican Church Noosa**  
**Sept 27, 2026**  
**Genesis 32-35**  
**The Patriarchs - Call | Covenant | Cost**  
**Wounded to be Whole**  
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Today, we are bringing our series on The Patriarchs to a close, as we come to the climax of the story of Jacob. Our topic is Wounded to be Whole.

We live in a culture that tells us wholeness means the absence of pain.

It's easy to think that a successful life is one that doesn't have suffering or struggle.

We show the good stuff on social media, we cover up our anxieties ~~at school or work~~, and we hide our relationship or financial problems. The general vibe is that if we show weakness, we've failed, if we're wounded, we're just broken.

But God's Kingdom works on a completely different principle.

In the Kingdom of God, brokenness is actually the way to wholeness.

God frequently has to deal with our self-reliance, with our stubbornness and pride, and in the process of that, he may need to wound us in some way so that we can walk in the strength that only he can give.

Please have your Bibles open to Genesis 32, as we watch Jacob change from a deceptive self-made man into an amazing, limping, child of God.

### **1. The problem of self-reliance (Genesis 32:1-21)**

Self reliance is a problem. As we step into ch 32, Jacob is caught between a rock and a hard place. Behind him is his father-in-law, Laban, whom he has just fled after twenty years of manipulating each other.

And, ahead of him is his twin brother, Esau.

The last time Jacob saw his brother, Esau was actively plotting to murder him because Jacob had stolen his birthright and his blessing.

Twenty years may have passed, but unresolved sin has a way of sticking around.

Look at Genesis 32:6. The messengers return to Jacob, saying: "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him."

Now this terrifies Jacob. Four hundred men isn't a welcoming committee; it's an army.

Did you notice Jacob's immediate reaction. It's the classic reaction of a man who relies on his own wit. He splits his camp into two groups, thinking that if Esau attacks one, the other can escape.

Jacob prays a beautiful prayer in vv 9–12, acknowledging God's faithfulness. But did you notice that immediately after praying, he goes right back to scheming. He sends wave after wave of expensive gifts—goats, ewes, camels, cattle, donkeys—with a view to buying his brother's forgiveness. He's trying to manage the crisis and engineer his own salvation.

Now, I would think that for many of us, this is exactly how we live our lives. When a crisis hits—whether it's not doing so well ~~at school~~, or a relationship struggle, or a confronting diagnosis, or an overwhelming sense of purposelessness—our default mode is to manipulate things. We try to fix it, or manage it, or buy our way out. We kinda think ... "It's going to be up to me to fix this."

But God loves Jacob too much to let his schemes succeed. God's going to strip away every human prop that Jacob has, until he's got nothing left but God Himself.

## 2. The struggle of grace (Genesis 32:22-32)

This brings us to the dark banks of the Jabbok River. Where the struggle of grace starts. Look at v.22. Jacob sends his wives, his servants, his eleven children, and all his possessions across the stream.

v.24 contains one of the most haunting sentences in the Old Testament: "And Jacob was left alone."

To get to the place of true spiritual wholeness, God often gets us alone. He silences everything else, the busyness, the internet, the distractions, our comfort, until it is just you and Him in the dark.

And when Jacob is alone it says - "a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day."

I reckon the sleep app on Jacob's watch that night, gave him a really poor score.

But who is this mysterious man?

The prophet Hosea tells us it was an angel, but Genesis 32 makes it clear this is a Theophany. Now a theophany is a visible manifestation of God; and it could be said that this theophany was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Jacob thinks his ultimate enemy is Esau, but he discovers something else that night. He discovers that his ultimate opponent is God.

Jacob has been running from God and trying to outsmart him his entire life. But now, God steps right into the centre of Jacob's life.

They wrestle all night.

Think about the physical nature of wrestling. It's exhausting. It's intimate, it's close, it's hard work. You can feel the breath and the weight of your opponent.

For hours, Jacob holds on, refusing to give up. He's using all the grit he can muster.

Look at v.25: "When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him."

Now it **doesn't** say the Man couldn't overpower Jacob because Jacob was stronger. It means God allowed the match to continue to let Jacob use up all his strength. And then, with a mere touch, God dislocates Jacob's hip.

The hip socket is the strongest joint in the human body. It is the centre of leverage, power, and stability.

With one touch, God permanently crippled Jacob's strength.

Suddenly, Jacob can no longer wrestle. He can no longer launch an offensive. All he can do now is cling.

And the Man says, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob, hangs onto the Lord with a shattered hip, and cries out, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." (v.26).

This is another turning point in Jacob's life. He realises that his cleverness cannot save him from Esau, and his strength cannot defeat this Man. He is utterly helpless. He realises that if he doesn't get a blessing, he's going to be dead.

The Lord asks him a staggering question in v.27: "What is your name?"

Does God not know it? Of course He does.

But twenty years earlier, when Jacob's blind father Isaac asked, "Who are you, my son?", Jacob lied and said, "I am Esau." He stole the blessing through deception. So really, for twenty years, Jacob has been living under a false identity, running from who he actually was.

By asking, "What is your name?", God is calling for a confession.

No more games. Who are you?"

And he says, "Jacob."

Which means heel-catcher, supplanter, deceiver. He finally confesses exactly who he is.

And then comes a gospel breakout in v.28: "God says, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans, and have overcome.'"

Now what is that all about?

How did Jacob overcome?

Not by winning the match, he actually overcame by losing it! He overcame by surrendering; by clinging to God in his weakness and begging for a blessing.

This is the paradox of the gospel. Real spiritual victory is only found in total surrender to God.

The sun rises in v.31 as Jacob passes Peniel, and the text notes that he was "limping because of his hip."

Jacob left that riverbank with a permanent limp. Every step he took for the rest of his life would be a painful reminder that his own strength was broken. But that limp was his greatest trophy, because he was wounded to be made whole.

### **3. The Grace of Reconciliation (Genesis 33)**

What happens when a person is broken by God? Well, things radically change.

In Genesis 33, Jacob lifts his eyes, and there is Esau with his four hundred men. But notice Jacob now. He doesn't hide in the back, he walks out in front of his family. He's limping, vulnerable, and completely exposed, but he bows to the ground seven times.

And look at v.4: "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."

What changed? Jacob spent all of ch 32 trying to change Esau's heart with money and strategy. But while Jacob was wrestling with God, God was changing Esau's heart. When you let God handle your vertical relationship, he takes care of your horizontal ones.

Jacob looks at Esau's forgiving face and says a profound thing in v.10: "To see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favourably."

When you've been broken by the grace of God, you stop viewing other people as threats to be managed. And you start seeing them through the lens of grace, and reconciliation, and mercy.

Now chapter 34 is a very sad excursion into a case of sexual abuse of Dinah, one of Jacob's daughters, by the men of Shechem. And his sons deal with it in terrible ways which make things very hard for Jacob politically.

#### **4. Returning to the First Love (Genesis 35)**

But in the midst of the ruins of all that, when Jacob is filled with fear that the surrounding nations are going to destroy him, God speaks again, and calls Jacob back.

Look at 35:1: "God said to Jacob, 'Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.'"

God is so remarkably patient. When we make a mess of our lives through compromise, God doesn't abandon us. He calls us back to the beginning. He calls us back to our first love.

Notice Jacob's response now. The crisis has finally shaken him out of his spiritual lethargy. He says to his household in v.2: "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes."

They dig a hole under an oak tree in Shechem and bury their idols, their foreign earrings, and all their items of compromise. They bury their past.

And look at what happens when they finally obey.

v.5: "Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them."

When Jacob tried to defend himself with lies and weapons, he was terrified. But when he repented, threw away his idols, and obeyed God, God's protection was totally around his family.

They arrive at Bethel. Jacob builds an altar. God appears to him again, reconfirms his new name, Israel, and reaffirming the covenant yet again!

But ch 35 ends with a series of profound losses.

Rachel, the love of Jacob's life, dies giving birth to Benjamin (v.18). Then Isaac, his dad, dies at a ripe old age (v.29).

Following God does not exempt us from grief or sorrow. But there is a massive difference between the meaningless, destructive pain of Shechem in ch 34, and the sanctifying, hopeful grief of Bethel in ch 35.

At Bethel, Jacob is no longer trying to scheme or outrun death and sorrow. He worships, and is anchored in the promises of his unchanging God.

So we come to the end of our series - Call | Covenant | Cost.

As we look at Jacob limping away from the Jabbok River, I think we see a shadow, a picture, pointing forward to someone infinitely greater.

Centuries after Jacob wrestled in the dark that night, another Man went down to a riverbank, crossed the Kidron Valley, and went to the Garden of Gethsemane. He, too, was left entirely alone in the dark. His followers ran away, and his friends fell asleep.

Jesus wrestled with the weight of our sin, as he sweated blood in his prayers that night. On the cross, Jesus didn't just have His hip out of joint; He was pierced through for our transgressions, as Isaiah 53 says, He was crushed for our iniquities.

Jesus allowed Himself to be completely broken and wounded on Calvary, so that you and I could be made eternally whole.

He was wounded so we could be whole.

Have you grasped that great truth personally yet?

If you haven't, I could think of nothing better to do in my last week of ministry among you, than to talk with you about that truth, and help you to grasp it.

For those of you who do know that great truth, maybe you're carrying the physical and emotional limps of a long life. Perhaps you've experienced the losses of ch 35. If that's you, then I encourage you to lean on Him. Because His sustaining grace is rich and full.

Are you willing to let God wound your pride so He can heal everything that's wrong?

God is the only one to make us whole.

He's the God who calls. He's the God of the amazing promise and covenant, and He's the God who makes the cost, all worth it.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We thank you that you do not discard broken things, but use them to build your Kingdom. Father, forgive us for our deep-seated self-reliance. Forgive us for the times we try to scheme our way through life instead of trusting you and your covenant promises.

I pray for anyone here today who feels alone in the dark, wrestling with circumstances beyond their control. May they experience the sweet surrender of clinging to Jesus. Please strip away our pride, purify our hearts from all the modern rubbish we hang on to, and grant us the grace to walk in your strength, even as we walk with a limp. We ask these things in the beautiful, scarred, and victorious name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.