

Sermon for Trinity Episcopal Church, Grand Ledge
October 20, 2019
Proper 24 Year C
The Rev. Dr. Gail Shafer

Have you ever had conflict between family members? Brother against brother?

And have it cause so much estrangement that the family members haven't seen each other for years. One stole from the other, or cheated the other and so they go their separate ways. Often thinking they would never come back together.

That is where we find Jacob. He is coming home after years away. He knows he was in the wrong, and that Esau might bear such a grudge that he could make war on his family. Over power Jacob, and destroy all that Jacob loves. In the part of the story we just heard, Jacob wrestles with "a Man" all night, and just as morning is breaking the match ends in a draw. But God is faithful, in a little and a lot. And though Jacob has to wrestle with God, or this angel of God, he holds out. Survives. And through that persistence, the covenant with God continues. And Jacob knows that this is the vestige of the Lord. His name is changed to signify the transformation.

As he approaches his brother, fearful of the expected conflict, Jacob prays that God will deliver him, and that his brother will be pleased to see him, ending the

exile, and allowing Jacob to bring his family home. It is his persistence that is noteworthy. Despite what seems like fearful odds, Jacob continues toward his brother, and his army.

Paul encourages Timothy to be persistent in his proclamation of the Good News. Don't be way laid or distracted by those who would be faithless. Stay with the truth, and always act faithfully.

Then we are told of the judge that seemingly did not care about those who came to him. It is because of the persistence of the woman, and her repeated demands that the judge relents, and grants her justice, just to get rid of her.

All of these stories tell us not to lose hope. To hold onto our faith. Believe that God will intervene on our behalf as is good for us. None of these stories tell that God defeated our brother in battle. No. God allowed the brothers to be reconciled, and the families united. And did you notice that Jacob did not ask God to harm his brother? He only asked for forgiveness from his brother, and safety for his family.

The Psalm assures us that God is not distracted from our welfare, not even to sleep. He watches over each of us night and day. What a comfort to know that there is one who is so powerful watching over every aspect of our lives.

It isn't easy, and it isn't all sweetness and light. Sometimes we get our hip dislocated. Sometimes we have to face our greatest fears, and sometimes we lose hope despite ourselves. But God doesn't lose faith in us, and we must not lose hope in God, and the gifts of God as we face what every fear or adversity set in front of us.

If God is willing to watch over us, we should be willing to pay it forward.

Today is stewardship Sunday. It is a day to reflect on the gifts from God in our lives. We may not be as wealthy as we would like, or as healthy, or as young or old. It makes no difference to God. We are to embrace all other God's children, so that they may enjoy the blessings that come from persisting in the call to be God's hands and feet in the world.

We live in a world where there are many needs. The people at 10 o'clock will hear about Homeless Angels, a shelter for those who don't know where they will live, or where the next meal is coming from. We will be having our Ministry Fair after the 10 am service. This is an opportunity for everyone who is engaged in a ministry to name it, and ask others to join them in servicing God in a particular way.

And all of us will be given a chance to make a pledge of financial support to Trinity. Not just for our ministry here in this building, but in the greater community of Grand Ledge, the diocese, and the world.

I ask you to prayerfully consider how you will serve God in this place, through giving of your time, talent, and treasure. And then write it down. Make it an official covenant to strive to give of what you have been given.

Be persistent in your love for your God, and those who travel the way with us.

Amen