



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

8th Sunday after Trinity ~ August 2nd 2020

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

I am continuing to enjoy the services on TV and radio and also from St Albans, Ely & Leicester Cathedrals, and you may have found others.

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

We are resuming some of our Church services with socially distancing, and will maintain, for the foreseeable future, our zooming, emailing and leaflet deliveries; we want people to have a genuine choice.

St Peter's: Sundays 8am & 11am ~ Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's: Sundays 9.15am

St John's: Sundays 9:30am ~ Tuesdays 10am

Please Note:

We are now advised to wear a face mask when attending communal worship in church

Prayers for this Week

Bountiful and compassionate God, you place in the hands of your disciples the food of life. Nourish us at your holy table, that we may bear Christ to others and share with them the gifts we have so richly received. We make our prayer in the Holy Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

God of compassion, whose heart goes out to the hungry and destitute; who takes our lack and transforms us into much: give us the bread that satisfies, the food without price, that our lives may be freed to share your overflowing love; through Jesus Christ, the breaker of bread. **Amen.**

Reading: Genesis 32 v22-31

Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When 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. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Meditation

What's in a name?

I certainly get a bit annoyed when people shorten my name. I only identify as Andrew, not something else; it is part of who I am. Being called "ginger" by some always felt a liberty to me and I never really made that connection that it was Me despite my looks. At my school, boys were known by the last names, which I think was, and intended to be, less friendly, matey, or familiar. But, as there were three boys with the surname "Smith" in my class, we were known by our initials; so I gained another school identity as A.J. which became familiarised as "adge". It is not uncommon for people to be known by different names in different parts of their life. Of course, some people do change their name, through choice, or through social convention, such as the old fashioned but still common idea of wives taking their husbands name. Our name is important to our identity and who we are.

When Isaac and Rebekah had their twins, the names chosen seem to reflect their characteristics. Esau, the eldest, could also have been called ginger, but he ended up being named HAIRY (for that is what Esau means). Jacob, the younger twin, got his name not so much from his physical characteristics, but from the fact that he was born holding his brother's heel. His name, Jacob, in Hebrew both alludes to heels and also to the fact that he would usurp his brother's inheritance as Jacob can mean both "He takes by the heel" and "He supplants". In today's reading, Jacob gets a new name, Israel. There are many occasions when names are changed in these biblical sagas, and all have a significance.

Jacob had fled his own country because of his treachery, and to find a wife and a future. Now he is returning having acquired much; wives, children, wealth and status. Jacob is fearful of how Esau will receive him, and sometimes it reads more like the planning of a military campaign than the reconciliation between two brothers. Jacob sends his wealth, his flocks, his family ahead of him, either to impress Esau or in some way as a protection against his own destruction in revenge for his treachery. All have been sent ahead, Jacob is left behind, alone, to wrestle with his thoughts, his conscience and his God. This wrestling is described in physical ways; it seems to be an even contest with no easy winner. In the end, for the wrestling has lasted until daybreak, Jacob is finally thrown to his knees as if his hip is dislocated.

As it is now getting light Jacob's wrestling companion wishes to go, for he does not want his face to be seen, but it is too late, he has been seen. Jacob asks to be blessed, he may have been defeated, but he does not wish to be destroyed or cursed. Then after asking his name, Jacob is renamed Israel, but cannot get the name of his partner in wrestling, but he does get a blessing and Jacob knows he has been with God.

Remember, in later stories, Moses has to hide when he encounters God on Mount Sinai, for "no-one can see God and live" yet his face reflects the glory of God. When Moses encounters God in the seemingly burning bush, he also asks God's name, and gets the enigmatic answer; "I am who I am" or may be "I will be who I will be". Just as God cannot be named or seen, he cannot be tied down, defined or restricted. Yet he can be wrestled with. Indeed, his people receive that name, Israel, which means they are the people who have, or are wrestling with God. It seems that the primary characteristic of being God's people is to be wrestling with God. It is not a static picture but an energetic one. It is more a picture of taking questions to God, than it is of God providing answers. We are invited to challenge, interrogate, transform and engage with God and his world. Being God's people is to be wrestling with him.

But there is another name we have to bring into the discussion now. Jesus. For Jesus is the God who was seen face to face by so many different people. For Jesus is God making himself accessible on earth. From the accounts

of Jesus' life in the gospels there was a lot of wrestling, with Pharisees, with Romans, with disciples, with ordinary people. He gave of himself through actions that had to be wrestled with to get their significance. He taught through parables which challenge and invite questioning and interpretation. He chose disciples who were forever experimenting, trying to find ways to follow Jesus. He lived and died in such a way to provide a myriad of questions. He did not simply provide an instruction manual for life, rather he continued with the wrestling and invited us to join in.

And what of his name, Jesus, what does it mean? What does it signify? What, if we were immersed in Hebrew language and idiom, pictures and ideas would it give us to connect with? Jesus means "Little Joshua". Jesus is not named after his earthly father Joseph, or his enigmatic heavenly one, "I am who I am". He is not named after great Kings of Israel like David, Solomon, Hezekiah or Josiah, or priests Zadok or Aaron. He is not named after any of those great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos who witnessed to God. He was not named after any of the ancestral patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, or any of the twelve tribes of Israel, or even the original human Adam, or the great liberator and law giver Moses. No, he is little Joshua. Joshua who led the people INTO the promised land. Joshua whose name means "He saves". Jesus is the little saviour, the little one who brings in the future, the little one who fulfils God's promises.

And Jacob, back in today's reading, after he has wrestled with God, is blessed. And we, as we continue to wrestle with God, are blessed.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him king of glory now;
this the Father's pleasure, that we call him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty word.

At his voice creation sprang at once to sight,
all the angel faces, all the hosts of light;
thrones and dominations, stars upon their way,
all the heavenly orders, in their great array.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures to the central height;
to the eternal Godhead, to the Father's throne,
filled it with the glory of his triumph won.

Name him, Christians, name him, with love strong as death,
but with awe and wonder, and with bated breath;
he is God the saviour, he is Christ the Lord,
ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue
all that is not holy, all that is not true;
crown him as your captain in temptation's hour,
let his will enfold you in its light and power.

With his Father's glory Jesus comes again,
angel hosts attend him and announce his reign;
for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him king of glory now.

Just as I am, without one plea
but that you died to set me free,
and at your bidding 'Come to me!'
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, without delay
your call of mercy I obey
your blood can wash my sins away:
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind!
Sight, riches, healing of the mind
all that I need, in you to find:
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am! You will receive,
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve:
because your promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am! Your love unknown
has broken every barrier down:
now to be yours, yes, yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am! Of that free love
the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
here for a time and then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.