

Sunday 26th July 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Opening Prayer

Lord, open the eyes and ears of our understanding today as we prepare our hearts for worship. We want to see you with our spiritual eyes today. Amen.

Hymn: Open the eyes of my heart lord StF4151

Let us pray together

Lord our God, you require truth in the inward parts. We do not wish to deceive but at times we are not honest with ourselves or honest with others. Take any deception, known or unknown and pour out your Spirit of truth. Today we receive your Holy Spirit and ask that as a cool glass of water, you will refresh and cleanse us today of all sin and duplicity. We give you thanks that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is his gracious word: 'your sins are forgiven.' Amen. Thanks be to God.

Today's Readings Genesis 29:15-28 and
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Time to Reflect Our agricultural friends will know the concept of sowing and reaping. I'm not a gardener but I know if I plant seed *potatoes*, I will probably dig up *potatoes*. There are numerous biblical passages pursuing themes of sowing and reaping. Jesus taught parables along these lines. In Galatians 6:7 one reads these words, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (ESV). Similar words are found in 1Corinthians 6:9 & 2Corinthians 9:6.

However, this not just a New Testament concept, in Job 4:8, one reads these words, "As I have observed, those who plough iniquity, and those who sow trouble, reap the same" Job 4:8, and in Hosea 10:18, we discover the prophet's warning, "You have ploughed in wickedness and reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your mighty men."

Consider our Old Testament reading in Genesis. Jacob has been deceived and was given Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob the deceiver is himself deceived. We read in Genesis 25:29-34, how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew. In Genesis, Chapter 27, we read how Jacob tricked his aging, blind father, Isaac into giving him

the first born's blessing. There are other trickeries pertaining to Laban's flock (Genesis 30) but just before Jacob and Esau meet again, Jacob has an encounter at Peniel.

On this night, Jacob wrestles an Angel and before the day breaks there is a *name change*. This is significant because Jacob's name means, *supplanter, or one who grasps the heel*, (as pertaining to his manner of birth). The name change given to Jacob is now *Israel*, a combination of the Hebrew words for "wrestle" and "God."

What is now sown in Jacob's life through his encounter with God is a new way of life. Not only has his name been changed but his character will be forever marked by the event at Peniel. As Christians, we have received a *new name* (Isaiah 56:5, Rev 2:17; 3:12, and a *new nature* (John 3:6, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10, and 2 Corinthians 5:17) so that we can sow good seeds in the lives of others.

I can testify of a new nature within. Since, coming to Christ, I have changed. The Scripture says, "The Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image" (2Corinthians 3:18). According to Wesley there would be an initial sanctification process (a process that attends to the entire work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life) at salvation then a continuing work where the mind of Christ was and is being formed in the Christian's daily life.

Take a time to sit quietly and ask yourself – what work has already begun in your life? Perhaps, you are not where you want to be but you have progress from where you were.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Dear Father, I thank you for the ongoing work in my life. I know it will continue until you take me home. Thank you for sins forgiven, for a life with you now, and a life with you in the hereafter.

We pray for the Methodist Church, nationally and worldwide.

We pray for the universal Church and the churches that have met through technological means during this time.

We pray for all those who have suffered loss in this present coronavirus situation.

We thank you for every act of kindness done during this time and all the imaginative ways that ministers and lay workers have used to keep in touch with their congregations.

We pray for those who are in need of healing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Lord in your mercy, **hear these prayers.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Through all the changing scenes of life StF 638 or sit quietly or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

Lord, I have heard the good news that you accept and love all people, including me. Grant that whatever I do this day I will be responding to this love with a humble and thankful heart. **Amen.**

(Taken from Day 26 of Methodist Prayer Handbook, p.76 by Gwenllian Knighton, supernumerary minister, Gwent Hills & Vales Circuit).

Original Materials by Rev Heather Wilson, Wolds
& Trent Circuit, Lincolnshire District