**INTRODUCTION**

* Donnie at Bachelor Zip Line
* Gave presentation in class yesterday – *gonna be a little weird – your sermons are always weird dad*
* We are going to take a look at the Jacob, specifically wrestling with God.
	+ Comparison with text from the same region and some.
		- Nuzu (Nuzi) tablets (1800bc) - Laws and customs patterned in the Genesis story
			* Habiru (Hebrew) / Nuzians (Horites)
			* Themes: adoption (Jacob to Laban’s family), marriage (tradition of working) inheritance
		- Asking about influenced of ancient epic stories like Gilgamesh (2100bc)
			* Considered the oldest fictional tale known
	+ Historical, Textual Comparisons, Redaction theory – Not going to do much of that here
* I would however, like to introduce an idea called Canonical reading.
	+ Includes a splash of literary analysis.
* Canonical reading: recognize this text as canon and ask why [Canonical]
	+ Regardless of one’s criticism about history and formation of the text and story
		- (Which, we will not be able to fully know)
	+ “Integrity of Reality” – example: *he said – she said bickering match*
* Theological significance and what it means to us.

**PRAY**

**JACOB – Story Overview**

* Jacob’s dream ladder 14 years before
	+ Stole inheritance and Birthright

**Gen 28:10-22 10** Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. **11** And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep.

**12** And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! **13** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. **14** Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **15** Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

**16** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” **17** And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” **18** So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. **19** He called the name of that place **Bethel**, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

**20** Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “**If** God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, **21** so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, **22** and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.” **>>>>>** [MAP]

**Met by angels,** “**messengers**”

**Gen 32:1-12 1** Jacob went on his way, and the **angels** of God met him. **2** And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God's camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim. **3** And Jacob sent **messengers** before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, **4** instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. **5** I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’” **6** And the **messengers** returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.”

**7** Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, **8** thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.”

**Prayer**

**9** And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ **10** I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. **11** Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.

**12** But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” **– Remember the promise to Abraham/ to him at the crossing of the Jordan**

* Remember, Jacob stole Inheritance and Birthright
* But **did he?**
	+ Crossed the Jordan with only a staff. – Not much inheritance.
	+ Yes, the he tricks Issacs into blessing him, but really the Birthright is God’s to give, not Isaac.

**Wrestling**

**Gen 32:22-32 22** The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. **>>>>>** [Jabbok]

**24** And **Jacob** was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.

**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.

**26** Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But **Jacob** said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

**27** And he said to him, “*What is your name*?” And he said, “**Jacob**.”

**28** Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called **Jacob**, but **Israel**, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

**29** 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. **30** So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”

**31** The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. **32** Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

**Gen 33:4** But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

**Gen 33: 10** Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.

**Gen 35:10** – Note: **God has to reiterate Jacob’s name change.**

**CRITICISMS**

**Literary (textual) components**

* Interruption in the story (injection) – Documentary Hypostasis - very different writing style
	+ Abram-Melchizedek (Gen 14); Tamar-Judah (Gen 38); Bridegroom of blood (Ex 4:24)
	+ Very refined section and deeply purposeful
	+ Word play: Jacob (**Ya`aqob**) – Jabbok (**Yabboq**) – Wresting (**abaq**)
	+ Mystery in relationship: ambiguous of victory/defeat & divine/human (Geller, P.53-54)
		- Unclear about the messengers, Unclear about the unknown aggressor
			* Unclear event of Wounding hip with a touch. What is meant ‘***touch***’
		- The reader expects the opponent to be Esau turns out to be Divine
			* Opposite as the messengers – literary play (reversing the parallel)
		- Jacob says he sees the face of God, then tells Esau
			* “your face is like the face of God, and you have accepted me” – strange allusion
	+ The promise, a central connection always a bit opaque, always in the background.
		- Tying the individuals (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
			* Now has tied the individual and national implications
			* Expanded the promise into “titling” the people – giving a deeper identity (**Israel**).
		- It actually becomes (IS) a theme that ties the entire bible together. \*\* good segue \*\*

**Canonical Criticism/Reading** (Redaction criticism)

* Integrity of Reality – regardless of historical accuracy (may be literal) what is the author(s) doing
	+ This story has come to us as canon for a reason. It is not a haphazard telephone game.
	+ This is a critical story in the history of a people. Cherished and holy.
* Draw out of it Two things that it is communicating: ➀**Identity** and ➁**Reality** (of the relationship)
* [**Identity**] Renamed of Jacob - What is your name?
	+ (Not Jacob = supplanter/schemer) (Israel = struggles/contends with God)
		- **“a rite of passage”** – sustains wounds that cripple him.
		- Overcome adversity that will forever affect him.
* The beginning of the story of **Israel** *as a nation.*
	+ Immediately shrouded in mystery
	+ “The name Israel (Yisra – El) is such a mystery that paradox is the only fit form of expression in describing its origin.” (Geller, P.54)
* Links the Typological significance of Abram – Nation – **Believer** **>>>>>** [Michelangelo]
	+ Israel, the nation personified (Yisra – El)
	+ This story gives an anchor to the identity of the Israelite people.
	+ All through bible, the people point back to this. Over and over, it is retold
	+ A few weeks ago, we even saw it in Acts, Stephen’s speech.
* A family’s identity is often found in the stories of their ancestors struggles to bring them here
	+ Wagon train, Plymouth rock, Land grab in *Chewelah – growing up in abject poverty*
	+ Overcoming adversity to get you where you are now.
* It **strangely** comes out of this confusion of dialog; series of pronouns and acrostic/rhyming words
	+ Jacob stealing his inheritance and getting nothing
	+ Conniving for the family blessing, but it really has nothing to do with his actions.
		- The Blessing must come from God – link with Jacob’s ladder dream.
		- Reiterated in the Jacob’s prayer and then at his name changing.
* [**Reality**] (of the relationship)
	+ **Paradox** (unknowing) of the engagement with the divine (God)
		- **Purposeful ambiguity** written in the text, blurring the boundary of divine and human
		- Ambiguity between victory-defeat and divine-human is the aim
	+ There are two antagonists in the Genesis story (Esau and the heavenly being)
		- God, but very mystical – cryptic.
		- In a sense, that is what we will always be faced with.
	+ Isn’t this the “Integrity of Reality” laid out plain and obvious.
* What is the Lord’s will for me? What is the Lord saying? Where was the Lord in that?
* “Only that which is utterly intangible, matters. The contact, the spark of exchange. That which can never be fastened upon, forever gone, forever coming, never to be detained: the spark of contact.”

 – D.H. Lawrence

* The Bible is always in paradox.
* Here is an ideal. Here is a promise.
	+ Now here are all these stories about how that ideal is not met, or even impossible.
	+ Recognize how the promise cannot be fully satisfied.
* There is always a wrestling that is going on.
	+ And the Israelite people are the showcase.

**Interlude about historicity of scripture**

* We will never know the historical specifics. (Literal – Folklore)
	+ - Some of this maybe sound strange/challenging to you.
		- May be uncomfortable with this type of discussion
	+ Many who go to seminary, or advanced education in the bible lose their faith
	+ Can force a redefinition of inerrancy
	+ Where is the anchor of my faith? In a book – or – what is ***in*** the book, what the book speaks
* What can we learn from it, take away from it, how do we read it?
* Brilliantly written: Inspiration (Human – Holy Spirit)
	+ No documents like it. A beautiful blend of a mess of humanity
		- Struggles, sorrows, joy and glory. Depression and oppression.
		- Psychologic, philosophical, social and economic, ethical rules and problems.
		- Poetry and story. Offers clarity, yet is often mysterious and cryptic.
		- A prefect representation of me. Of humanity
		- A prefect representation of the condition of humanity – and our relationship with the Creator
	+ Many other writings have components of this: but none have all of this, nowhere near it
		- Nor so accessible and personable.
	+ There **is** a reason why
* The Bible is evidence of God’s work. Undoubtedly.
	+ *But understand, if you stripped it from me – I would still believe.*
* Brevard S. Childs
	+ (Big word warning: *ontological*: Nature of **being**) in ontology is the Q: What is existence?
	+ The text of Scripture, when infused by the Spirit with the full *ontological* reality of God, resonates with a fresh voice and evokes from its hearers the response of praise and wonder. This voice, which transcends historical origins, calls forth the hymns, liturgy, and art of the Church in ever-changing forms of grateful response. This is her source of praise and thanksgiving. Its genre is confession, its function is worship.

**CONCLUSION**

* **Theological** Philosophical significance
	+ Representation of the human condition; an ambiguous wrestling with man/God
	+ **Not** a clear, black and white; **Not** Western Aristotelian causality.
		- Near East canonical story of a people struggling through relationship with God and identity
	+ The relationship with God is a strange one. Before the law, before the nation of Israel.
		- Yesterday, today and forever.
* Why shouldn’t it be?
	+ God is not a creature. God is the creator. No law governs God. God is law.
		- The **Aseity** of God (a being exists in and of itself)
	+ The psalmist captures a bit of it when he writes (Ps 8) – Read it.
* **Practical** significance

**Hos 12:2-6** The LORD has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. **3** ​In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. **4** He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke **with us**— **5** the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name:

**6** “So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and **wait** continually for your God.”

* Strove with us! Wait continually!
	+ In a sense, this is where we are at in the Church age
* Point this all to Jesus. Christophany/Theophany **>>>>>** [Michelangelo]
	+ The promise grows through scripture.
	+ From just land and nation – to utopia and deliver

**Gen 49:8-12 8** “**Judah**, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. **9** Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? **10** The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. **11** Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. **12** His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

* Israel is the Typological believer – The church has been grafted in – we have inherited this story
	+ The promise of God has developed and blossomed through the story of the Bible.
	+ It is for all. The promise land is the Kingdom of God
		- Alfred Edersheim

‘The Kingdom’ means the rule of God; which manifested in and through Christ. It is apparent in the Church; it gradually develops amidst hindrances; it is triumphant at the second coming of Christ… and, finally, perfected in the world to come.

* + You are that believer. The struggle is human’s struggle
	+ Every event Jesus present
		- Some event straight forward
		- Most significant ones in my life are more paradoxical experience
		- Mystery in the relationship
	+ Forming our identity.
* It is ok – wrestle with God.
	+ Pray through the Psalms of lament
	+ Suffer along with Job
	+ It is ok to curse your condition – cry out to God
		- Sometimes this sucks!
			* Why are you downcast o’ my soul?
			* You set a table among my enemies.
	+ Get it out – have a relationship that is real
* Do it with others. Though the typology of Israel is an individual believer, it is still a community too.
	+ God is trinitarian – in relationship
	+ He refines us that way, he grows us – matures us – and heals us in relationship.
	+ That is our renaming – As we do this God will enrich our identity in Him.
* It is ok - Wrestle with God - Wrestle with God all the way to