



*The same night [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ... Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ... Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is*

*breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.'*

*~Genesis 32.22 ff*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Have you seen those social media memes about the year 2020? There's a picture of an outhouse on fire and the caption reads, "If 2020 were a scented candle...". 2020 is the year your peanut butter toast falls face down, your pizza loses its toppings in the oven, and your keys are locked into your running car. Between the pandemic, killer hornets, early snow, a divided country, and an election year, you are not alone if you think you've had just about enough of 2020.

Jacob of Genesis in the Bible has also had enough. He has had enough of being estranged from his brother, Esau, enough of being considered a cheat and a heel (which is what the word "Jacob" means), just enough. So he is on his way home to make amends, and he's worried. He knows his brother has every right to kill him, every right to still be angry (Feel free to read the whole story in Genesis). So Jacob sends all his wealth, his family, everything he owns across the river, Jabbok, and he's left alone.

Until, that is, a man, presumably a very earthy angel, comes and wrestles with him. All night long they struggle. Talk about a dark night of the soul. As Jacob wrestles with this stranger, he also wrestles with his fears, his doubts, his guilt,

his hopes of reconciliation, every instance of where he really has cheated someone or been less of the man that he wants to be. And then as dawn breaks, the stranger seeks to break Jacob's hold and leave. But Jacob will not let him go, not until he receives a blessing.

This is where I think we are, in so many ways. We have been wrestling with our hopes and fears, struggling with an uneasy estrangement from neighbors, friends, and family that we either disagree with or that we miss terribly. As the election results are delayed, as the pandemic continues and case numbers rise, as the days grow shorter and the dark nights lengthen, remember Jacob, remember to hold on, remember to hold on for blessing.

Jacob holds on and receives the blessing of a new name. No longer will he be named cheat and heel, but rather Israel and the father of a nation. I encourage you too, to hold on for blessing and receive the name "Resilient," "Peacemaker," "Survivor of 2020."

Because our night isn't over yet. We are still wrestling with fears and uncertainties, struggling with divisions and the need for reconciliation. Election results will take some time. Please wait. A vaccine will take some time. Try to be patient and be your best self. And just hold on, hold on for blessing. The day will come when our dark night will be over. We might, like Jacob, be a bit bruised when the new day dawns. But our journey towards making amends will continue. I pray that friendships will be renewed, divisions reconciled, and we will all emerge as a better version of ourselves.

Hold on for blessing.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan