

July 30, 2017 Year A, Proper 12 The Rev. Glen Gleaves

Ah, Jacob, you rascal! You've finally met your match in your uncle Laban, your future father-in-law, who outsmarts the trickster in you! **Payback!!**

Folks, you've been following along with me in this Jacob soap opera for the past couple of weeks, and in a couple of minutes, you & I'll have to leave him

Wages of working for Uncle Laban? What was *promised* was the hand-in-marriage of drop-dead-gorgeous, *second*, daughter, Rachel. What he *got* was Laban's sleight of hand Bthe older daughter Leah, instead, the one with the "lovely eyes." Folks, *we* know what that description means, because we've all fallen, *once*, for that blind date of some friend-of-a-friend, who had, we were told, "a great personality." *Read between the lines.* Leah was, at best, homely. Rachel: homecoming queen material. Fourteen years is a loooooong time of your young (read "*fertile*") lives if you're going to be raising up the 12 principal cast members of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat!* And do that *poLYGamously* with your two wives, well, *actually* with the one very fertile wife (who has lovely eyes) , and with the handmaids of the drop-dead-gorgeous (*but barren*) wife you just paid 14 years for! Did I mention the handmaids?? Hmmmmm.... *G-rated today.*

Remember 2 weeks ago I suggested you *might* just enjoy reading through the end of Genesis for your edification, education and entertainment? It *does* get interesting, *no?* Bottom line is this with Laban and Jacob: God can *easily* produce the *greatest* of outcomes from the *least likely* of people and situations. ... *Include ourselves AND our worst enemies into that thought.* If you've read through to the end of Genesis, you've got the idea.

Jump forward to Matthew.

Today's gospel is full of good one-and-two liners. Jesus knew how to wrap up tasty portable theology in a doggie-bag we can take home with us after this sumptuous repast we're about to enjoy. Or, preSENT to a gathered crowd, from a boat or on the shore, without a megaphone. And, thanks to our 10th grade English teacher, we know what a *simile* or *metaphor* is.

The kingdom of God is like Jesus shouts over the lapping of the waves. Each of these is a memorable tid-bit carried in one breath, whether from a boat to a beach crowd or in a house with the disciples. And with that, Jesus gives us *practical, portable* Coffee Cup Theology. But, you know what? Knowing what the *Kingdom* of God is like *tells us a WHOLE LOT about what God is like!*

We live out our Christian lives with a passel of metaphors, similes, scripture, books, liturgies, prayer book collects and hymns about the Kingdom of God in order to have some sort of human concept of the vastness of the Wideness of God's Mercy, of God's Amazing Grace, and how our Mortal Flesh should Keep Silence, as All Creatures of our God and King, Lift Up Our Voices and Let Us Sing.

Ahh, the mixed metaphorical attempts at understanding the richness of our faith in a God Who is far too big for the whole of all Christians, Jews, Muslims and everyone else to get our arms or heads around !!

Like Jacob, we are poised right now, at a moment in time which will define how prolific [fertile?] the community of faith will be or become in this place.

Like it or not, we no longer have Heidi as Dean. Like it or not, we no longer have Gabriel as her Assistant. We will either let go of our past and follow the Holy Spirit into uncharted territory, or we will cling to our past, and dwindle. It's up to us.

We are on the brink of a new day. This morning's Coffee Cup Theology could well say, Yesterday is HISTORY, tomorrow is a MYSTERY, but today is a GIFT. That is why it is called the PRESENT. **Trite**, but true.

This week we will welcome Father Paul Bresnahan and his wife, Cindy. Father Paul will be our new Interim Dean. And what a *present* he will be! He will be among us as one who helps us, as individuals and as a community of faith, to articulate and plan the future of St. Peter's Cathedral. Sounds like serious work, and it is.

The job of an Interim Priest may be the best of all in the church, however, because it is quick and transformative and then, *poof!* The temporary Interim is gone! With the arrival of our chosen Dean-to-be, who, together with the Chapter and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, will beckon us into where God wants us to be.

But there will be inertia that we'll use to resist. It's called **baggage**. Each one of us has some, and some far more than others. Then, the congregation, as a whole, has its own. Sometimes, a congregation can have really *great* baggage, and an Interim Priest has the joy of poking it, naming it (*maybe even making it giggle!*).

A word of advice, let Fr. Paul gently do his work. If you don't like where the church has gone, or where it soon might, *or will, go?* *You have baggage that needs professional inspection. It'll be too heavy for you to shlep* Make

an appointment with Father Paul. Tell him you've got heavy baggage that might need inspection. If you *don't* tell him, he'll know, anyway :-) We clergy are trained to be perceptive!

Look up. You're looking at the bottom ribbing of the Ark. (Thankfully, it's been cleaned!) And, except for a few church-mice, we're pretty much the only critters aboard. It's going to be a fascinating voyage we're embarking on, so lighten your luggage, and get on board this ark as it plies the Church's baptismal water on a journey like none you've ever been on. Be prepared for new scenery, new routes, new beauty.

I want us all to grab a blue Hymnal and open it to hymn # 464. Let's read the words of the poet W. H. Auden together. Mull them over, feel them, own them. Together...

1. He is the way.
Follow him through the Land of Unlikeness;
you will see rare beasts
and have unique adventures.
2. He is the Truth.
Seek him in the Kingdom of Anxiety:
you will come to a great city
that has expected your return for years.
3. He is the Life.
Love him in the World of the Flesh:
and at your marriage
all its occasions shall dance for joy.

You and I may well be the least likely people to carry forth the Kingdom of God but God can easily produce the greatest outcomes from people as lowly as you & me. God knows.

With Jesus as the Bread for our Journey, The old Ark's about to shove off...

All Aboard!!