

Wednesday May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Genesis 33	<b>57 The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he [Ps 93]</b>
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*Today's hymn is the Scottish metrical version of Psalm 93*

- 1 The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he  
with majesty most bright ;  
his works do show him clothed to be,  
and girt about with might.
- 2 The world is also stablishèd,  
that it cannot depart,  
thy throne is fixed of old, and thou  
from everlasting art.
- 3 The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,  
they lifted up their voice ;  
the floods have lifted up their waves,  
and made a mighty noise.
- 4 But yet the Lord, that is on high,  
is more of might by far  
than noise of many waters is,  
or great sea-billows are.
- 5 Thy testimonies every one  
in faithfulness excel ;  
and holiness for ever, Lord,  
thine house becometh well.

Here it is to the tune 'Stroudwater':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAUr3hFpUwc>

This Psalm tells us of God's victory over evil. 'The floods' represent the powers of evil, and everything which sets itself up against God. Israel was never a sea-going people, and so the waters and floods always seemed unpredictable and dangerous to them. Two well-known stories in the Bible about sea journeys both involve storms, and almost end in disaster- Paul's shipwreck, and Jesus with the disciples on the Lake of Galilee.

But the Psalm reminds us that God is far greater than those

natural forces of storm and flood, and also greater than the forces of evil and sin. The opening words tell us that the Lord reigns, ie He is King.

Verse 2: God is King from of old.

Verses 3 & 4: God is King now.

Verse 5: He is King forever.

Past, present and future; Lord of the past, the present, and the future. The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. The one who was, and is, and is to come.

When Jesus and his disciples got caught up in a storm on Galilee, they were afraid, but he was resting in God's care.

And when they woke him, his words to the gale and the waves were 'Peace, be still!'. He still says that to us today, in whatever 'storms' we find. Yes, the Lord is King!

Today's reading is **Genesis 33**

*Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.*

*But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. 'Who are these with you?' he asked.*

*Jacob answered, 'They are the children God has graciously given your servant.'*

*Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed*

down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

Esau asked, 'What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?' 'To find favour in your eyes, my lord,' he said. But Esau said, 'I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.'

'No, please!' said Jacob. 'If I have found favour in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favourably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need.' And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

Then Esau said, 'Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you.'

But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.'

Esau said, 'Then let me leave some of my men with you.'

'But why do that?' Jacob asked. 'Just let me find favour in the eyes of my lord.'

So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.

After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground

where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

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### Reconciliation

It had to come sooner or later- the day when Jacob would meet his brother again. Jacob must have been dreading it, after all the ways he had got the upper hand over Esau. Sending the 'women and children first' was not to protect them, but so they would bear the brunt of Esau's anger! Jacob tries to show utmost humility by prostrating himself seven times in supplication (was this his way of saying sorry?). But he need not have feared. Like the father in the Prodigal Son, Esau runs, embraces and kisses him (compare Luke 15:20). Blood was thicker than water, and Esau was only too glad to be reconciled to his deceptive brother once again.

Jacob lays it on thick by comparing seeing Esau with seeing the face of God! And he insists that Esau takes a share of his large flocks. But despite Esau's invitation to travel together, Jacob goes his own way: Esau to the land of Edom (Seir), and Jacob to Canaan. (Succoth, then Shechem). Jacob must have experienced what William Cowper did when he wrote these words in a hymn:

*'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
the clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.'*

In his great commentary, John Gibson (formerly Professor at New College) notes that Jesus echoes this scene in his parable of the Prodigal Son, which Gibson describes as 'the irony of grace'. He writes:

*'The grace that chose the younger and rejected the elder son, that chose the cunning man and rejected the guileless, that chose the suave and rejected the boorish, that chose the vindictive and rejected the forgiving; the grace that in Old Testament times chose Israel and rejected the Edomites, the Moabites, the Canaanites and all the other peoples round about; and the grace that in our day has chosen us and has by-passed so many other men and women better by far than we are'.*

A sobering thought. And one which can only leave us responding with gratitude, praise, and devotion.

**Prayer** *This is mental health awareness week, and this prayer is from the Mental Health Ministries:*

Loving Creator, we come to you in this week of Mental Health Awareness.

We know that you are a God of love and compassion. We come seeking your presence, comfort and guidance. We come as family members, friends, co-workers and mental health professionals. We come this day because we believe that you, Lord, love each one of us just as we are and you walk with us on our individual journeys through life.

You see the ignorance and injustice that divides and separates people struggling with mental illness and you weep with us.

Give us courage to face our challenges and open us today to the many ways you are already working in our midst. Help us to identify mental illness as the disease it is, that we might have courage and wisdom in the face of ignorance and stigma.

Inspire us as we seek to overcome fear, acquire knowledge, advocate compassionate and enlightened treatment and services.

Lead us as we open our hearts and homes, our communities and job opportunities, our houses of worship and communities of faith. Enable us to find ways to be inclusive of persons living with mental illness in our everyday lives. Be with doctors, therapists, researchers, social workers, and all those in the caring professions as they seek to overcome ignorance and injustice with care and compassion. Sometimes, Lord, we feel discouraged and hopeless in the face of so many challenges. Help us to see ourselves as you see us...persons of value and worth...persons of creativity and potential. May we come to understand the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit in bringing about health and wholeness. And may we go forward with vision and hope.

We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.