

The Rev. Jay Lawlor 7th Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 11, Year A – July 23, 2017

The Rev. Jay Lawlor continued as guest priest at St. David's Episcopal Church, Bean Blossom on July 23, 2017.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 22, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) was in his third week as supply priest at St. David's Episcopal Church for the 7th Sunday After Pentecost. The Rev. Lawlor reminded congregants "You are loved by a God who has made you for goodness." Following is an excerpt from his [sermon](#):

“

Jesus always stood on the side of the weak, vulnerable, and oppressed. He called for compassion, mercy, and justice. And we are to do the same.”

The Rev. Jay Lawlor

We have this week another of Jesus' parables on seeds and weeds. We'll get to that in a moment. Let's begin with Jacob. Like so many in the Bible, Jacob is a study in contrasts.

On the one hand, he is a revered ancestor of Israel. Son of Isaac and Rebekah, and the younger brother of Esau. He

eventually marries Leah and fathers twelve sons who become the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

On the other hand, Jacob is a swindler – a con artist, who tricks his brother Esau into parting with his birthright and his father Isaac into giving him the blessing of the firstborn that should have gone to Esau. Jacob is later tricked by his uncle Laban, then turns the tables on Laban, and is eventually reconciled to both his uncle Laban and his brother Esau.

Jacob is both a significant and interesting person from the Hebrew Bible, to the history of Israel, and our own history as Christians. Jacob's dream recounted in Genesis is a good example. On his way to Haran, in Mesopotamia, Jacob stops and rests at Bethel. He has a dream of angels ascending and descending on a staircase between earth and heaven. And he sees himself on a ladder, and God appears beside him. And God says to Jacob: "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." The Genesis account continues by stating: Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" 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." (Genesis 28: 15a, 16b-17) In the morning Jacob places the stone and anoints Bethel as a holy place.

In this story we come to recognize something of ourselves, as people of faith. Something of how we value holy spaces, like this space, where we gather and connect with God in both Word and Christ's very presence in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. That very connection with God something we seek and value because it nourishes us to be God's people in the world. We can also recognize that as important as our sacred spaces are, they alone do not contain God. The story of Jacob reminds us God is always with us, no matter where we go or where we are.

As Saint Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans: For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit

bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:13a)

Bruce J. Malina, New Testament scholar and Professor Emeritus New Testament and Early Christianity at Creighton University, has observed that "Abba" in Aramaic, the language of Jesus and how Paul wrote of the term in Romans, did not mean "Daddy," as it is in Hebrew today. Malina writes in his book, *The Social Gospel of Jesus*, the following: "Both in New Testament translation as well as from grammatical construction, Abba means father, a term of respect and honor. [...] God is not a daddy but a patron. In the political religion preached by Jesus, the God of Israel is Israel's patron."

This understanding of God as parent/patron is important to Jesus' preaching and teaching. It establishes that our relationship with God is unequal. We recognize that we rely on God, we honor God, and that God has reign over heaven and earth. It is from this place we enter into another of Jesus' parables from Matthew's Gospel.

Jesus is pretty clear in how he interprets the parable of the weed in the field to his disciples. But what are we to do with that? What implications does it have on our response to evil in the world? Is Jesus suggesting we should be passive observers of injustice?

Jesus' very teachings and actions throughout the gospels are clear indicators to the contrary. Jesus always stood on the side of the weak, vulnerable, and oppressed. He called for compassion, mercy, and justice. And we are to do the same. [...]

Full text of the Rev. Jay Lawlor's sermon is available at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/rev-jay-lawlor-sermon-7-sun-pentecost-year-jul-23-2017/>

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