



Bible Readings for July 26, 2020

Genesis 29:15-28

Psalms 105:1-11, 45b

Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Reflection from Ray

Today's story happens some months after the incident we read about last week when Jacob slept among stones at Bethel. That lonely, hard place where God spoke with him after a dream and reclaimed Jacob as a grandchild of Abraham, and heir to the covenant promises of God.

Jacob moved on and reaches his destination, the lands of his mother's kinsman Laban. He walks up to a well and there, with the twist of fate that makes good love stories work, he meets the girl who will steal his heart. Along comes delectable Rachel, daughter of his uncle, who brings flocks to the well to be watered. Jacob does his macho thing, by removing the large covering stone from the well and drawing water for the flock himself. The love story is launched. Jacob is smitten. He goes home with Rachel and works for her father.

(cont. page 4)



It's been a dramatic and confronting week in Melbourne. We will be at this Lockdown for many weeks more before we can even think of beginning to lift the restrictions. Church Council has not met for some time and is looking at organising a Zoom meeting to deal with some things that have backed up for us. And see page 3 of this edition of The Harvest for some details on Bible Studies the World Council of Church have put out and that could be another good reason to get together on line for those who have the capacity. Let Ray know if interested.

COVID-19 Reflections from Church Leaders

Deidre Palmer, President of UCA Assembly, and all Synod Moderators have written short reflections on our learnings as a church, our hopes and challenges and where we experience the Holy Spirit at work. "We hope these reflections might offer some insights into our Church as we move into the future, and that you will share what you are learning, hoping for and finding challenging at this time," Deidre says.

You can read their thoughts [here](#)





Do Yourself A Favour

I think we will just do another couple of weeks of Australian songs. And that means we need to get in two iconic bands. INXS and AC/DC. Let go with "Don't Change" by INXS this week. Songfacts writes, "Lead Singer Michael Hutchence and keyboard player Andrew Farriss created this song in 1982 while recording their third album, Shabooh Shoobah. The song has a defiant feel, with Hutchence warding off negativity. Farriss offered this explanation: "Everything Changes, or does it? Nothing lasts forever and yet most of us at some point in our lives want it to." >>

"Don't Change" came as INXS were making a steady rise, gaining lots of ground in their native Australia and starting to get noticed in other parts of the world. Their career path was similar to that of U2, another band with a mega-charismatic frontman who was developing as a lyricist. Both groups released their biggest albums in 1987: The Joshua Tree and Kick.



Mental Health Matters by the Rev Fiona Botcher (Deacon)

I'm often challenged by the image of God that patients bring to our conversations – a God of reward and punishment. A childlike vision of a God who says: "I want to love you, but you are never quite good enough". These patients have often experienced a parent, or trusted adult, who couldn't, or didn't, love and protect them. Their inner child has held tightly to this rejection and has built a new "god-parent" to project it on.

Some might say that this is religion at its worst; a God that continues to punish the neglected, and there have been times when I would agree. But I have also found hope for real transformation from this place. A relationship with a parent can be near impossible to repair, but in God there is hope for renewed relationship built on unconditional love.

Jesus tells us to "... receive the Kingdom of God as a little child..." (Luke 18:17) which I hear as an invitation to welcome and hold every person, however "childlike" they are in their journey and faith, into our communities.

We walk along side them as fellow children; sharing stories, crying, laughing and loving. And above all, hoping.



Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings Live Tour

22 July and July 24 ICAN be taking you on two exclusive tours so you can see for yourself what the atomic bombings did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the people who lived there. And of course, you will be able to ask the guide questions throughout the streaming.

This has never happened before; our followers will be the first ones who get to do a guided live tour of both museums on instagram. [Follow ICAN on instagram to get notified when the tours go live >>](#)

Healing the World: Eight World Council of Churches Bible Studies for the Pandemic Era

The global coronavirus pandemic, which has brought death to hundreds of thousands and serious illness to millions more, also poses profound spiritual questions and real challenges to Christians everywhere.

The pandemic itself has become a fundamental test of our faith in God and God's providence, and it urges us to earnest re-examination of our relationship to God, each other, and the natural world.

In Healing the World, the World Council of Churches offers these eight Bible studies to facilitate our coming to terms—as individuals, groups, and communities of faith—with the loss, fear, and confusion engendered by the pandemic, and the bracing prospect of building the world anew.

Readers will also find further spiritual resources on the WCC's coronavirus page at www.oikoumene.org/coronavirus

Click below to download the bible Studies.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/HealingtheWorldbiblestudies.pdf>

Ray would be interested in meeting on line with anyone who wished to take up the offer of looking together at these Bible studies. Let him know if you are interested and we will set something up.

The Assembly have asked us to be IN PRAYER FOR:

- Those who are enduring fear and hardship because of the COVID19 pandemic, particularly in areas where there have been outbreaks.
- The sustenance and wellbeing of all those who are relying on government payments to get through the COVID19 crisis.
- For strength and persistence for all those who are working for peace. May their voices be heard and peace become a reality.

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Reflection from Ray cont.

Slowly the love story unfolds. Very slowly. And then after serving for his uncle Laban for 7 years Jacob get to marry Rachel. Happy days! But in one of the most memorable of many about turns in bible stories the Deceiver is deceived, trickster is tricked, the grasper is grasped and learns he cannot always take what he wants. It's a major serious sting played out on Jacob and he fell for it hook line and sinker. Having pulled a similar stunt on his father Isaac you would have thought that Jacob would be a bit more attuned to this type of ruse. That sneaky Laban has substituted the older sister Leah for the younger one Rachel and Jacob finds himself married to, in his mind, the wrong woman - though in Laban's eyes the right one because as he tells Jacob you can't marry the younger one under the older one is married off. Laban still gives approval (very patriarchal isn't it?) Jacob can marry Rachel but he has to do another 7 years service but remains true through it. It was Paul who wrote Love is patient, but wow this is stretching the boundaries!

We cannot reduce today's reading, or any of these grand narratives we are reading from Genesis, to a moralistic lesson.

Scripture does not work like that. That would be too simple. And what would you say? Maybe don't drink too much at your wedding reception? Maybe make sure you know for sure who you are going to bed with? What goes around, comes around? (some call that karma).

But the story does reinforce some of the themes we have already seen arise in this sprawling family saga. Despite he deception practised by so many members of this family the covenant promise of God remains in place and the spluttering, nearly derailed promise of land and descendants God remains faithful.

Secondary, the theme of the lesser, or the unfavoured being favoured by God is again present in this narrative. We see this emerge in so many stories and parables told by Jesus. In this passage are told a few times Rachel is the one Jacob loves but he has children with both wives. Joseph of the famous technicolour dream coat is one born to Rachel and what of the one born to unfavoured, unloved Leah? He is a lad named Judah. And if you want to see if he played any role in the unfolding Biblical drama of salvation look up the opening verses of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus - Matthew 1:2.

Do Yourself a Favour cont

The adulation and concomitant expectations were hard for both Bono and Michael Hutchence to deal with, but Bono got through it. Hutchence had a much harder time, and in 1997 he took his own life. The video was directed by Scott Hicks, who also did the INXS videos for "To Look at You" and "Spy of Love." It's low-budget but effective, with the band performing the song in a warehouse. This song is simple but effective, making it a popular cover for bands looking to rally the crowd. "It's a good pub band song," Andrew Farriss told Songfacts. "You don't have to know too many chords to play it."

This was the last song INXS set at Perth Arena on November opening act for Matchbox Thomas joined them on vocals was shocked when INXS would be their last show; they two days later. Watch a fresh



played live. They used it to close their 11, 2012, wrapping up a tour as Twenty, whose lead singer Rob during the performance. The crowd announced from the stage that it confirmed the news in a statement faced version [here](#)