

MEDITATION: *Adapting to Change*

How many of you have lived in Swift Current all your life? A few. So we have many people here who have left the place where they were born & possibly lived in several places before moving to Swift Current.

Changes are a part of life. I've got up thinking that I had my day planned, and one phone call or email changed it all. By the end of the day I hadn't done any of the things I had originally planned. Everyone one & everything has to deal with changes. Look at our picture on the screen – from a cocoon to a butterfly, now that is change. Change is not always easy.

In our scripture reading from Genesis we learn about changes. Jacob & Esau were twin brothers. As most siblings they didn't always agree on things. In fact, as most siblings, they had different personalities. Esau was born 1st so in the tradition of that time he should have inherited whatever his father Isaac had (wealth, land, etc.) (If you don't know this story read the Bible passages that come before today's reading). Jacob, the younger of the two, stole his brother Esau's birth-rite by trickery & had to flee his homeland because Esau his brother was very upset & said if he ever got hold of Jacob, he would kill him.

Today's reading picks up where Jacob is fleeing. He was scared & lonely, probably lost a lot of friends because of what he had done, & he was unwelcome in his homeland. He was running away not sure of his future. Jacob goes to sleep exhausted. While sleeping he has a dream. He dreams of a stairway leading to heaven, to God. When he wakes, he feels that God has spoken to him. He realizes that in spite of the trauma he was going through, & the bad things he had done, God is still with him. He places a stone in that spot to remind him and future generations that God is always with us. Jacob realized that God had promised him great things if he let God guide him. After realizing this, however, things didn't automatically change and become easy for Jacob, but he knew God was on his side.

Romans 8:22-23

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves groan

inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as heirs, the redemption of our bodies."

This letter of Paul's is written to Christians in Rome, many are Gentiles or non-Jews, people who had encountered Jesus & wanted to walk in his path. Paul was writing to Christians he has never met. There was a tension between Jewish Christians & Gentile Christians. Jesus was born a Jew so the Jewish people felt that God was only their God. Paul has been reminding the Jews that they are not the only ones God loves & gives examples of Abraham being favoured by God long before the God led the Jews out of Egypt to their promised land. He mentions Gentiles who have not followed the Jewish custom of circumcision but are still good Christians, living as Jesus taught them. Paul says you don't have to change to the Jewish traditions to be a good Christian. Having faith in Jesus and a desire to try to treat others as Jesus did, is all that is necessary. .

Paul reminded them there is a conflict within every Christian as they want to do what is good, but can't always carry it out. These are the birthing pains when trying to follow Jesus way.

From the Working Preacher we hear it put another way.

the suffering Paul speaks of is suffering that comes from knowing what the world could be, even as we live in the world as it is.

Now let's jump to the present. Much of what Paul said still can guide us. Paul was talking about accepting Jews & Gentiles alike all as children of God and how changing our ways of thinking, can cause us a lot of pain.

We see this today in so much unrest around the world & within our country. Some people are very upset that we are accepting so many refugees into Canada. They forget that foreigners are children of God just like us & and in need of a friendly smile & a little help to settle as many are fleeing their homeland, often leaving family behind, looking for a better life.

I think we would all agree our world is changing. It has changed from what we knew as children growing up.

I'm sure all of us can look back and see that there have been changes since we were younger. When you are my age there have been many changes.

One that immediately jumps to my mind are phones – I started with a party line & a phone that hung on the wall & you cranked a handle to get the operator – we didn't even have a phone number but a "ring" and ours was 1 long ring & 2 short. Now we have a phone that we can carry in our hand & don't need it connected to a wire. AND, we can do all sorts of things with it, like check our emails, search for information on a website, & take pictures, among other things.

Not only things have changed but so has society. At one time our whole life revolved around the little towns where we lived. Then as media started spreading news of what was happening in faraway places we began to realize there was much more out there in our world. Transportation improved & we began going further afield, even to other countries, & into outer space - all great changes.

But as I said before, change isn't easy. I remember leaving home for the first time. That was hard after being under the same roof as my parents for years and having them make major decisions. A more recent change for me comes with all these electronic devices. Each time I upgrade to a new computer or phone, I am very frustrated until I learn how the new one works – usually faster & capable of doing more things. Change can be uncomfortable at 1st, but lead to a better life once we adapt.

But changes aren't always good. Social media has been good as far as being able to interact easily with people all over the world, but it has also resulted in some people ruining people's reputations by putting things online that should be private or deliberately spreading false rumours. How about AI – Artificial Intelligence - for doing research & writing papers for students, or speeches for others. Sounds fantastic, but if not checked out thoroughly, before being used, a lot of misinformation can be spread. These are the birthing pains of change.

One change that is at the forefront of a lot of discussions is climate change. We've all heard of the rising temps, the horrible storms, the droughts, the out of control forest fires, the floods, & so on.

Lots of people are looking at how to improve the prospect of our earth being able to sustain life for many more years to come. Some people welcome this & others are upset with the proposed changes. Scientists have told us some of the changes we should be making. A big one is to cut our carbon footprint.

This has resulted in much controversy. Change is not received well, but going through the pain of change to prolong the life of the planet we live on is worth it.

What does God say about adapting to change?

Throughout the Bible we are encouraged to adapt, adjust and change. We are instructed to be transformed and changed into the likeness and image of Christ. In Romans 12:2 (NLT), the God directs us: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

If we think of the meaning of Jacob's surprise encounter with God at Bethel, it leads us to think about where we as individuals and as congregations meet God unexpectedly on life's journey. But then what do we do. Nod & say, "That's a good idea" & then go back to what we were doing before or do we DO SOMETHING. If we believe God is guiding us we should not be afraid to try something different.

Our actions don't have to change the world, just working towards change in our small part of the world.

I am going to read an excerpt from a sermon Jim Tenford the minister at St. Andrews U/C in Moose Jaw wrote. He's talking about doing something – in this case he was talking about sponsoring refugees as a positive action in the changes that are brought when we open our country to refugees. He strongly suggested sponsoring a refugee or a family as our part of helping those who are forced to leave their homeland for whatever reason. But he also realized that everyone helps in different ways – not everyone is comfortable taking on the responsibility of being a sponsor . QUOTE: If sponsorship isn't for you, there might be community organizations that help newcomers that could use some volunteer help, or maybe you could host a fundraising dinner to help. You could also write letters to politicians as individuals or as a congregation urging a strong and generous refugee program since, while some governments do try to help, others see this as a wedge issue to get their base fearful and angry.

And of course, the very best strategy for helping refugees is to help ensure that people don't have to flee their homes in the first place. Vote for people who support strong foreign aid spending.

Be mindful of how you spend your money, and ask questions of corporations on whether their products and policies support exploitation of the world's most vulnerable.

And of course, the biggest driver of human conflict and displacement in this century is going to be climate change and the resulting conflict and loss of arable land, so simply being mindful of our carbon footprint can be our small part in helping people live lives of peace and prosperity.

All through the gospels, Jesus talks about the coming age, the realm of God when all people will recognize that we are all kin. I don't believe that Jesus would recognize international borders or nationalities because we are one people under one God, all citizens of God's realm. We therefore, in showing hospitality to strangers, we are not flooding our land with foreigners, but instead helping to create God's realm. We are simply fulfilling what Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," (ESV). END OF QUOTE.

To sum it all up, if we let the Holy Mystery guide us & work through us, God will lead us through the pain that can come with change.