

Prayer and reflection resource

Week Three | “Esther and Jacob”



The image to the left is of [the painting 'Queen Esther'](#) by the nineteenth century artist Edwin Long, which shows Esther in the palace. She sits slightly hunched as her two maidservants dress her; her gaze at the viewer seems filled with sadness.

One maid is taking a gold ring from a treasure chest – is it a bangle or a manacle? The other holds up a fine cloth. Is she ready to drape it about Esther's shoulders – or to cover her completely?

What point in Esther's story do you think this portrays? How do you think she is feeling?

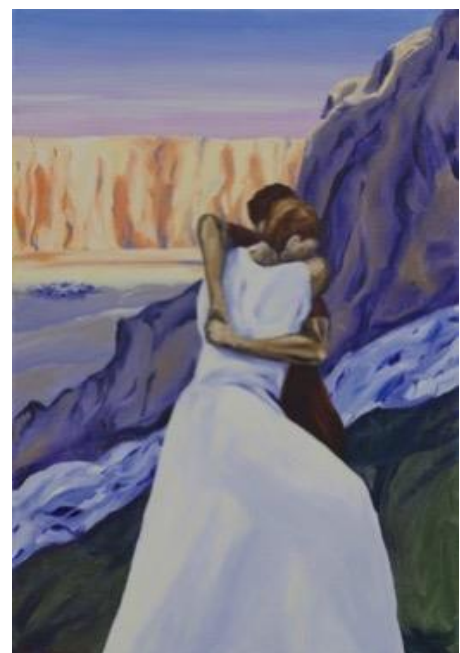
As you go through the week ahead be aware of the material things in your life. Do they isolate you from God and others? Or are they a means of connection through which God can work?

Our second image (right) is of the painting 'Jacob Wrestles with the Angel' by the priest Adam Boulter, from his [Into The Wilderness series](#).

It shows two figures in the blue light of the desert night, locked in an embrace. Our view of one is obscured by the other, who has his back to us and it is his long white robe which dominates the space.

In the background, the light of the sun is reflecting on the rocky wall of a distant valley. The struggle of these two men is almost over.

The piece was created in collaboration with the poet [Malcolm Guite](#), who wrote the following poem to accompany the painting:



Jacob Wrestles with the Angel

I dare not face my brother in the morning,
I dare not look upon the things I've done,
Dare not ignore a nightmare's dreadful warning,
Dare not endure the rising of the sun.
My family, my goods, are sent before me,
I cannot sleep on this strange river shore,
I have betrayed the son of one who bore me,
And my own soul rejects me to the core.

But in the desert darkness one has found me,
Embracing me, He will not let me go,
Nor will I let Him go, whose arms surround me,
Until he tells me all I need to know,
And blesses me where daybreak stakes its claim,
With love that wounds and heals; and with His name.

Reflections

Which of the two images we've looked at today speaks to you most about your wilderness experiences?

The stories of Jacob and Esther can be found in Genesis 32: 22-32 and the Book of Esther. What aspects of the stories do you feel most drawn to?