

Devotion, Week of January 28, 2024
Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We landed in northeast Australia on January 29, in Brisbane, in the state of Queensland. Brisbane, like other areas of Australia, was largely settled as a penal colony. Many of the people we met are proud to have ancestors who came as prisoners. Our guide spoke of former prisoners from the 1800's whose descendants are now judges and doctors. These people had a rough time of it and prevailed anyway. They made fresh starts in an often harsh environment, founded schools and churches, and built successful economies and cities.

I thought of Jacob, who steals Esau's birthright and has to flee to his uncle Laban's home some distance away to escape Esau's wrath. While there, he marries Laban's daughters, has 12 sons, and accumulates much wealth with flocks of goats and sheep (through trickery of Laban). When he and his wives decide to leave Laban and return to Canaan, he has a hard night wrestling with an angel, and ends up crippled as a result. And yet, in spite of these hardships and the turmoil of his family history, Jacob becomes known as "Israel," "the one who prevailed with God." His sons become the heads of 12 tribes of Israel, and those clans are still in existence today.

God often provides opportunities, even in our times of trouble, and if we take advantage of them, wondrous things can happen. The freed prisoners of Australia learned this, just like Jacob and his sons. Rather than despair, we can pray for guidance and God's assistance in using our own resources to build a better life.

Jeanne & Jim