

*Vision of the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)*, by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)

art selection and commentary by [Heidi J. Hornik](#) and [Mikeal C. Parsons](#)

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Paul Gauguin strove to depict the simple, direct faith of a group of women from Pont-Aven, a rural community in Brittany, France. His style, based on pre-Renaissance sources, is devoid of linear perspective and conventional organization. In the foreground, the Breton women, dressed in their Sunday garb and kneeling in prayer, are envisioning the sermon that they just heard. They transform a common cow into a vision of Jacob wrestling with the angel of God (Gen. 32:22–31). A tree limb placed diagonally across the expressive red background separates the cow from the struggling figures and serves as a visual representation of the river Jabbok. The Pont-Aven women learn from the sermon that the life of faith can be a struggle. Jacob wrestles at Jabbok and gets both a limp and a blessing.