

6-18-23

Sermon: The Promise of the Father

Scripture: Genesis 28:10-20, CTW Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

Hymns: 73, 687, 147

Theme: God's promises to Jacob in the desert are like the promises He made to us. Like Jacob, God has promised us his PRESENCE, a permanent PLACE and PROTECTION. We PERFECT his promise when we respond by trusting Him.

I. Introduction: Go from Faithless to Faithful

You remember the circumstances, **Jacob had deceived his father and stolen the blessing.** This was itself a testimony that he had no faith that God would bring about what He had promised. Since Jacob (and his mother) didn't believe God's word they took things into their own hands and created heartbreak instead!

A. The Problem of our lack of Faith. How very much like us, God has promised us that he will care for us if we will but seek his kingdom first but we lack trust and risk falling into destructive ways of trying to get what we perceive we want.

Jacobs' failures were born out of faithlessness, but Jacob himself was about to go from faithless to faith-full. It wouldn't mean automatic righteousness outwardly but **it would begin a life of transformation over the long haul.**

B. This is no different than what we experience – a long slow growth toward righteousness.

When Jacob gets to the end of a full day of traveling he's exhausted and while he may think it's little more than coincidence that he should be at that place; God has set up for him a divine appointment.

Bethel is a place with many stones. Jacob took one to use as a pillow supporting his head for the night and soon fell fast asleep.

I've always been a bit amused by this because, even though I like a hard bed, the thought of using a rock for a resting place does make me picture a comfortable place to sleep.

It's here in the midst of Jacob's exhaustion that God comes to Jacob with a Three-fold promise. And it starts with...

II. The first promise is of God's Presence:

A. God will never leave us nor forsake us. We are to take more pleasure and peace basking in this promise alone over almost any other. That's why one of the hymns I chose for today was "Standing on the Promises of God!"

To know that God is **ALWAYS** with us is the most sacred medicine our hearts could receive in times of doubt or trial!

This passage today invites us all into the scene as if to watch it, Three times starting in the twelfth verse we see the word "**Behold**" or "**Look**" because it's important that we catch the magnitude of God's appearance here which is the central point which the passage pivots on.

When God appears to Jacob in this dream it's apparently the first time Jacob has had a direct association with God. Until this day everything has been through his father Isaac, now it begins to become personal.

Numbers 12:6 tells us that dreams with visions are the normal way God begins the prophetic relationship "... if there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream."

B. So the promise of God's presence begins in many ways with this dream. It is the first communication Jacob has

had from God. The substance of the dream matters as well. Jacob's dream involved a ladder or a staircase which had its **foundation upon the earth and yet reached into the heaven of God**. In addition, the angels of God were going up and down upon the stairway.

In **John 1:51**, when Jesus and Nathanael first meet, Jesus makes a clear allusion to this passage as he speaks to Nathanael, and in response Nathanael as the new disciple **confesses that Jesus is the Messiah / the Christ and the son-of-God!**

Jesus responds by telling him that he would see greater things than that, including that he would see the angels ascending and descending upon the son of Man.

C. The Point for Us is that Jesus is the stairway to heaven, and he came and provided a foundation upon the earth for men to have access to God.

As the 15th verse begins the first promise is the promise of God's presence, and it's not lost on Jacob. Imagine if you can the position Jacob was in.

"Jacob's heart was probably filled with regret for the past, loneliness in the present, and uncertainty about the future..."

But as Jacob looks at the top of the staircase he sees the Lord there; and what he hears is that God himself will be with **this deceitful arrogant self-centered little man** until all that he has promised is fulfilled.

We all also have the same promise from Jesus in **Philippians 1:6** "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

I for one am grateful for the promise because the reality of "**new life in Christ**" is that the road is long and **there are times** when we feel as if we are alone and God is distant. It is in those

moments when we cannot see the hand of God that we can still trust Him **because he has promised not to leave us.**

III. The Promise of A Place:

A. After God promises His presence, He also promises a place. Like Jacob we have a promised place in heaven even as Jacob received a promised place in the promised land of Israel.

The promise here, is relevant for all of Israel. In fact we need to remember this promise and the many just like it which God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as to Moses and Joshua and all the People of Israel that the Land belongs to Israel.

It's important that we consider that promise in light of all that goes on in the Middle East today.

Throughout the books of **Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua** the layout of the Land and its borders are spelled out. You need to know that this sacred promise known as The Palestinian Covenant, **has not yet been fulfilled.**

Israel the nation has never once owned every square inch of the Land of Israel. The promise that they will is directly contrary to the liars and wicked men who claim that Israel has been replaced by the many factions that own the land now...

Since it hasn't been fulfilled yet, **we have to know that it will be eventually. Numbers 23:19** says "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

B. Listen to the words of Jesus in John 14:1-4 and let there be no doubt as to a place being prepared for us.

¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so,

would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **⁴You know the way to the place where I am going."**

...And of Course doubting Thomas was there and said "we don't know where you are going, so how could we know the way!" Jesus answered: "I AM THE WAY, and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by me!"

IV. The Promise of Protection

Look again at Genesis 28, verse 14. "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth" This is the promise of more descendants than can ever be counted and it is passed on to the succeeding generations.

It started with **Abraham** in **Chapter 12**; and moved to **Isaac** in the prophecy of his birth in **Genesis 17:21** "**...My covenant I will establish with Isaac...**" In addition to the promise of children it is also a promise of protection, because for God to fulfill **this** promise he will have to deliver Jacob from every danger that he meets.

A. The next portion of the promise is the blessing of all the families of the earth through Jacob and his Offspring: Jesus is in this group!

Whenever we study the Old Testament **we need to have our eyes peeled for the appearance of Jesus!** As it is written in **Psalm 40:7** Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me."

Remember when Jesus was on the **Road to Emmaus** with the despondent disciples. Jesus began to teach them... "And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ

to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." **Luke 24:25-27**

B. At the heart of all of these promises is Jesus himself!

After God gave Jacob these promises in a dream, Jacob responded in real life, **and it's in the response** that the promise is perfected because it achieves God's purpose for His people.

V. And How is This Promise Perfected?

A. The promise is perfected in Worship:

Look at Gen 28:16 where Jacob's response begins with a transformation. Everything that Jacob has witnessed takes the heart of this dishonest man and sets him trembling down in the depth of his soul. **No man can encounter the living God and remain unchanged.**

In fact the measure of our worship service should never be a blow by blow critique of the service, but it should **always be "did we encounter God through His risen son, Jesus Christ?"**

Notice that it's the presence of God that fashions Jacob's reaction.

Jacob, suddenly being aware of the presence of God, became afraid. His reaction was also one of awe.

How often have you been in mouth-hanging-open awe of the presence of God? We become too comfortable with the almighty if we treat His glory with flippancy rather than fright.

Jacob entered the presence of God without even knowing it, but when he became aware he began to tremble.

In the same way His great might and glory when we are exposed to them, should move us into the awe of worship and adoration;

so that we say "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God...!"

B. The promise is perfected in Sanctification:

In verses 18-19 Jacob commemorates the holy with a ritual and visible reminder by anointing this rock with oil.

As he does this he renames the area known for its crookedness (LUZ) into one that is Holy (Bethel= house of God). How appropriate that the place once known as something crooked should be changed into the house of God.

In this perfection, we are also transformed into the temple of the Almighty as the Spirit dwells in us.

Remember **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** where Paul says: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your Body.

C. The promise is perfected in Expectation:

Philippians 4:19 "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." What a sacred promise this is: and it is given to Us; and not merely to Jacob some 3500 years ago.

In response to God's promises, Jacob states for the generations to come:

"If you can do all that you've promised **you are God and you will be my God!**"

Jacob anticipated the provision of God, even as we are told to do when we "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...."

Matthew 6:33

We can expect that God will take care of us. The evidence of His care for us is itself continued evidence that God is indeed God.

D. The promise is Perfected in Sacrifice

As we come to **verse 22** we see what Jacob does here in promising to give God 10% of everything he has received.

The Journey from **Beersheba to Haran** is about **400 miles** and the journey from **Beersheba to Bethel** that Jacob has made in today's text is **40 miles** so that the journey thus far is a 10% tithe. **The end of this passage ends with a tithe!**

To give a tithe was an act whereby a person acknowledged that everything he had came from, and belonged to, God.

Those who say that the tithe is not for this age of grace miss the fact that the early saints practiced tithing **before the law was given.**

It was their expression of faith and obedience to the Lord who guided them, guarded them, and provided for them. **In short, for the fathers, tithing was not a commandment but an act of love.**

I believe that today the tithe of 10 % all that God has given us is merely starting point of the heart and not the law. It is an example from which we must expand upon.

Think about it! Is not the grace we now live in greater than the law? How then can we give less than what the law demanded if we are the recipients of something so much greater?

In the midst of Jacob's depravity, God, being a good Father, revealed himself and promised believers His PRESENCE, PLACE, AND PROTECTION. Jacob responded with faith and perfected that promise with WORSHIP, SANCTIFICATION, EXPECTATION AND SACRIFICE, as we should. AMEN? Let us pray.