

Second Sunday in Lent

Sermon Road Map
Pastor Roger W. Huffman

Genesis 28:10-17
February 28, 2021

Meet at Bethel for spiritual renewal.

- Wow! What a dream. That's one you'd never forget! That was God's intent.
- Jacob needed this revelation from Yahweh. So do we. Let's go there. Let's...

Meet at Bethel for spiritual renewal.

*Jacob woke up from his sleep, ... ¹⁷ He was afraid and he said, "How awe-inspiring is this place! This is nothing other than **the house of God**, and this is the gate to heaven."*

*¹⁸ Jacob got up early in the morning. ... ¹⁹ He named that place **Bethel**. - Bethel means house of God.*

- ❖ Who does Yahweh (the LORD) meet there?
 - Jacob tells us, recalling this event years later.
 - ♦ *Let's get up and go to Bethel. I will make an altar there for God, who answered me in the day **when I was in trouble**...* Genesis 35:3
 - ♦ **Trouble** - distress - an oppressive state of physical, mental, emotional and economic adversity. Why?
 - Jacob's father, Isaac, was about to bless his twin brother Esau
 - ♦ Rebekah, Jacob's mother, thought Jacob should receive that blessing.
 - ♦ Jacob went along with Rebekah's scheme to deceive Isaac into blessing Jacob.
 - ♦ Esau was furious and planned to kill Jacob after Isaac died.
 - So much for *God helps those who help themselves!* Faith trusts & obeys God.
 - ♦ Rebekah begged Isaac to send Jacob to her brother in Haran to find a wife.
 - ♦ Jacob, the homebody, was sent on a 500 mile journey, away from mom.
 - ♦ Alone, burdened with guilt, fear, questions about his future & status with God
 - ♦ *In an oppressive state of physical, mental, emotional and economic adversity.*
 - Yahweh meets a broken child of God in need of **his rescue and renewal**.
 - ♦ 70 miles down. 430 to go. About day 3 - weary, heavy-hearted, lonely
 - Meeting there with Jacob, Yahweh finds us much in the same state.
 - ♦ Weary, lonely, heavy-hearted, tired of all these COVID precautions/restrictions
 - ♦ Of greater significance, he finds us in Lent - examining our faith development and spiritual growth since last Easter - our progress & disappointment,
 - set backs, deception of others - deception of ourselves
 - *giving in* to choose the easy road - avoiding God-given crosses
 - delighting in what is shameful, and ashamed of what God delights in
 - lack of patience, kindness, gentleness - so much impatience, anger, bitterness
 - ♦ Yahweh finds us also in need of **his rescue and renewal**.
- ❖ What does the LORD do there and why?
 - A stairway bridge between Jacob and Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Isaac
 - Angels taking Jacob's cares to God. Angels sent to provide God's care for Jacob.
 - Yahweh's clearing up all doubts about Jacob's status with Yahweh.
 - ♦ Purely by undeserved love God made Jacob heir to the land promised to Abraham
 - ♦ Childless Jacob would be the father of multitudes - spread far and wide
 - ♦ The Messiah would come from Jacob's offspring to be the Savior of all people
 - ♦ Yahweh was Jacob's companion & protection, bring him home from exile.

- Jacob stood in awe of this vision proving God’s stunning undeserved love for him.
 - ◆ Humbled by such loving kindness after his deception & lack of trust in God
 - ◆ Yahweh’s words worked the **rescue and renewal** of this troubled soul
- Likewise Yahweh comes to us to **rescue** from ourselves and work **renewal**.
 - ◆ Where’s our personal Bethel stairway with Yahweh proclaiming his promises?
 - ◆ It’s our Baptism. He personally promised, *you are mine & I am your God*.
 - His promise of: guilt washed away, protection and rescue, companionship and leading us out of exile here, home to be with him.
 - ◆ You come to your Bethel stairway at the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus personally renews his promises: your sins are forgiven, new life is yours with me, and since I am your God and you are mine I will constantly keep you safe.
 - ◆ Jesus is the stairway/bridge across which our needs and God’s care come to us.
- Notice what Yahweh did and what he didn’t do.
 - ◆ He didn’t fix Jacob’s problem and send him home to Beersheba.
 - ◆ He equipped him for his life-journey with God’s sure relationship & promises.
- ❖ Press on clinging to grace to grow in tested character.
 - In order to **rescue** Jacob from his tricky self-reliant ways to nurture trust in him...
 - Yahweh sends him on to uncle Laban for blessings and faith maturation.
 - Jacob would be tested by Laban’s self-reliant ways and deception.
 - ◆ Jacob would survive, yes thrive, relying exclusively on Yahweh’s promises.
 - ◆ Yahweh did bring him back with a big family and possessions to support him.
 - ◆ Most important, he returned with tested character, which was tested further by wrestling with God at the Jabbok. Relying on God’s promises Jacob prevailed. God give him the name **Israel, because you have fought with God and with men, and you have won.** Gen. 32:28
 - We who are justified by faith - having peace with God - share Jacob’s calling.
 - ◆ We learn not only to rejoice in the good, pleasant, and easy gifts of God.
 - ◆ We learn - this has to be learned - our flesh hates it - to rejoice in our sufferings.
 - Why? Because under our God’s mentorship & care - rich benefits will come!
 - As Paul learned and taught ...***we know that suffering produces patient endurance, ⁴ and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. ⁵ And hope will not put us to shame...*** Romans 5:3-5
 - Trusting God’s care and promises we press on *patiently enduring* - anticipating
 - Putting faith into practice develops character tested by experience - seeing God’s hidden blessings raise from the ashes of suffering - firms up our faith.
 - This will not happen sitting at home thinking *warm thoughts about Jesus!*
 - If your spiritual life consists of occasionally recalling facts about Jesus, you are preventing Jesus from coming to you with a personal stairway of promises.
 - **Meet God where he promises to come to you** - at the Lord’s Supper, gathered around the proclaimed word, with saints encouraging mutual baptismal renewal. Meet in the house of God for spiritual renewal.