

## **Sixth Wednesday in Lent**

**Theme:** Place

**Centering thought:** Where have you encountered God?

**Scripture:** Genesis 28: 10 - 22

<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup> There above it<sup>[a]</sup> stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

### **Reflection and Questions to Ponder**

This story about Jacob's ladder is one of those passages, one of those Biblical stories, we know so well. It's such a famous story that perhaps we might need to re-visit it every now and again to see what spiritual truths God has to say to us through it.

You might remember the story. Isaac was an old man and was dying and was going to give his blessing to Esau. But Jacob, Esau's brother, tricked his father into giving him the blessing instead. Esau, understandably, was livid about this because he was to inherit nothing from Isaac as a result. So, in 27:41, Esau says, "The time to mourn my father's death is near; then I will kill Jacob." Rebecca, Esau and Jacob's mother, overheard what Esau said and warned Jacob and told him to go and stay with his uncle in Haran until Esau's anger cooled off.

So Jacob leaves home and flees for his life. And that's where we pick up the story. Jacob is running for his life; he is scared, tired, lonely, he is carrying deep pain inside, feeling guilty, feeling remorseful for what he has done. Jacob is in a dark, dark place. Essentially, Jacob needs an intervention from God. He needs a healing experience from God.

At sunset, he came to a certain place and camped there."

A place with no name; an anonymous area. His journey had come to a temporary halt. He was languishing, tired, over-wrought in some anonymous part of the country.

Now when Jacob saw the Ladder, it was in a dream. Jacob was asleep and there is no other time when we are least in control of our destiny than when we are asleep. This picture of Jacob reflects the life situation of some of us, perhaps. There are times in this journey of life – both individually and congregationally that we have found ourselves tired and scared, with the spirit of adventure knocked out of us. We find ourselves at this certain place, which is an uncomfortable place to be. And we may be feeling just too tired to do anything about it...or just not know what to do about it or maybe feel unworthy to have God seek or sort us out...Like Jacob, we find ourselves at this certain place of discomfort.

If that describes your situation, then there is good news...

### **God meets us on this Journey**

The central point of the passage is that God chooses to meet with Jacob and brings healing to him and encourages him into a life of faith. There is an encounter here between Jacob and God. And that, ultimately, is what healing is: it is a personal encounter with the Living God which brings light and life. But – in our journeys - what might that encounter look like for us? \*\*This story of Jacob tells us two things.

*First: our encounter with God will be all about grace, grace, grace*

The message of Jacob's ladder? – we are connected to God. Healing and Salvation are made real to us through Jesus. The Stairway to Paradise is Jesus himself. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is through Christ that the healing power of God comes to us.

*Second, we learn through this story that God's Word is the power that lights the way to life.*

In this passage from Genesis 28, there is a 3-fold Promise from God to Jacob: The Promise of Presence: vs. 15: "I will be with you"; The Promise of Protection: vs. 15: "I will protect you wherever you go"; The Promise of Blessing: vs. 14: "Through you I will bless all nations". The Word of God to Jacob, the Word of God to each one of us in this Lenten season is the same: God promises to be present with us through our trials in life, God promises to protect us in our most vulnerable times, God promises to pour out abundant blessings on our lives. Healing begins when we receive this word from God, when we encounter God's presence, protection and blessing.

1. When have you experienced an encounter from God?
2. When have you just stopped so that you could have a chance to experience the God who is present with you?
3. When was the last time you confessed your full belief in God, acknowledged and claimed God's promises for your life?

**Prayer:** *Almighty God, who journeys with us even when we have lost sight of Your presence, we thank you for the truth of your Word and your never failing promises. Thank you for this story of Jacob's dream which reminds us of your promises, not just to Jacob, but to all of us. Help us to be faithful in our service to you and in responding to your call on our lives. We need not fear for you are with us. Help us, as we move through life, in those times where we make good decisions, and in those times that we do not make good decisions, to trust that you will never leave us nor forsake us. Amen.*