

1. 1-2-22

Sermon- Arise and Shine With Jacob

Scripture- Genesis 28:10-22. CTW Psalm 72:1-7

Hymns- 192, 432, 225

Theme- Was Jacob bargaining with God? NO, he was pledging his future to God. Therefore this is a good passage for the beginning of a new year, because God calls all of us to a fresh start with Him. For this new year re-pledge your future to God and get ready to receive His blessing. But know this, there will be difficult lessons to learn, just like Jacob had to experience!

I. Our salvation is first & foremost about what God has done; and only secondarily about our response to what He has done.

I personally can't think of many passages in the Bible which make that more clear than what we're looking at today.

A. It's only when our hope rests in God's grace that our faith becomes unshakable and we have true assurance.

And that's the lesson that Jacob had to learn. And we are to allow Jacob to teach us.

The first key is that it has nothing to do with us... how good we are, or how well we serve, or anything at all like that. It has everything to do with God, and His grace, His election, and His mercy.

In Romans; when Paul says, "God has mercy upon whom He wills..." instead of Pharaoh, he could've just as easily turned to the story of Jacob. Instead of looking at the **hardening aspect**, Paul could've looked at the **mercy aspect**. And Jacob is a perfect example of that truth.

Let's first look at verses 10, 11 and 12. If you remember; Jacob had just left his home. His father Isaac had sent him away, thanks to Rebekah's plan. Rebekah knew that Esau was intending to kill him.

II. Before Isaac sent Jacob away, he confirmed the fatherly blessing on him. Then Isaac sent him off to Haran, so that he could find a wife from Rebekah's family.

But now, Jacob is on his own. I don't know about you, but I see Jacob as one of those guys who doesn't like to be alone. He's one of those guys who needs attention from others.

But here he is; he's all by himself now. He's isolated. And it's dark. So Jacob decides to set up a makeshift camp, and rest through the night. And all of a sudden, he has a dream.

A. Now it's important for us to see how God comes to Jacob in this instance. At this time; Jacob's not a spiritual guy. He's never really sought after God, or even really shown a whole lot of interest in God.

He's on his way to Haran, to find a wife, but more importantly; to escape his brother, and so it's not like he's taking a sabbatical, or a spiritual pilgrimage or anything like that. He's on this trip for himself.

And he's most likely not looking for God to teach him anything through this, or even expecting God to move in his life. He's just doing what he has to do to get away from his brother Esau.

And so the thing is... **Jacob hasn't seen the depths of his sin yet.** He doesn't understand the totality of his depravity. In-other-words; Jacob doesn't realize his lostness yet.

So he's not looking for God in all of this... but God comes looking for him. And the text tells us that God comes to Jacob while he's asleep, and that's God's way of stressing the passivity of Jacob in all of this. **Jacob is asleep, but God is chasing him. God is pursuing him.**

And verse 12 tells us about the dream that Jacob has, and we see what we commonly call "Jacob's Ladder." There's a lot of weird stuff written about this.

There are extra-biblical sources that say this was the place where Mary actually conceived Jesus... that Bethel was the place where God the Son, was placed in the womb of Mary.

But the Bible itself never actually says anything like that. Remember that Luke's Gospel actually tells us that Mary was in Nazareth when Gabriel spoke to her and told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and she would conceive a child.

B. Here's what I'm seeing in this passage. First of all; it's a dream that Jacob has, but it's from the Lord, and it's showing him something. Angels of God are ascending and descending the ladder. They are going up and down. And the LORD Himself is standing at the top of the ladder.

Here we see two things. First of all; the ladder stands in direct contrast to the Tower of Babel. Let me explain how. The Tower of Babel was man's attempt to reach God. It represents all of man's efforts, and man's attempts to ascend to the heavens.

However, here we see a ladder. The Hebrew word is "Sullam," which is more commonly translated as a stairway, or staircase.

Therefore on one hand you've got the Tower of Babel, which is man's way, and in this passage you've got this stairway, revealed to Jacob by God and despite what Led Zeppelin said in the song, you can't buy your way up the stairway.

The purpose of the stairway, or the ladder, is to show us all the concept of Jesus Christ. He's the only way to God. And so this vision, is showing Jacob that there is a way to God, but it's God's way, not man's way.

C. Next we see the angels going up and down. That shows us the providential care of God, as He confirms His blessing. These angels... these ministering spirits are going back and forth, doing God's will. God is at the top of the stairs, or ladder, symbolizing that He's the one sending these angels on their tasks. This is meant to be a comforting thing to Jacob, and to all who should hear this story after that. **(US)**

Jacob didn't quite understand it yet. He was still doing things his way, but through this dream, and other things, God was teaching him.

Notice that God doesn't put any conditions on Jacob. This covenant isn't conditional... it's purely grace. And I can't stress

enough how this story... and the whole story of Jacob, is a lesson to us on God's grace through the gift of His son, Jesus Christ.

Grace is never about what we've done, or what we're doing... or even about what we will do. It's all about God showing us undeserved, unearned, unmerited favor and kindness. God initiated this whole encounter. We never saw Jacob in prayer, begging God to come and confirm the covenant. It's all God.

D. God confirms the covenant with Jacob, and He gives him assurance by giving Him his Word and His promises. And that's how we all come to trust God and grow in our relationship with Him. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

God does this... but we need to remember, Jacob is no super spiritual person at this time.

In-fact, Jacob is a deceiver, and his response shows us a mixture of faith, but also doubt. And you see that a lot of times in people. A person who is a liar, has a tendency to think that everyone's lying to them.

A person who is violent, is always expecting violence.

Well Jacob's a deceiver and a cheat, and so he's got this tendency to distrust everyone. **And we see that in verses 16 – 22.** And like I said, it's a mixture of faith and doubt.

III. The Response Called for by Jacob After God appears to him in this dream, Jacob wakes up and he responds by worshipping. He builds an altar and worships the Lord. And he calls the place "Bethel" which literally means "The House of God!" So; he's doing pretty good up until that point, but then he makes a vow, and you notice; it's a conditional vow.

A. Jacob Makes A Vow. He says, "God if you'll be with me, and watch over me, and feed me and provide clothing for me, and make sure that I come back home in peace, **THEN** the LORD will be my God, and not only that, I'll be come a faithful tither." Basically he's saying, "God if You do what You just told me You would do, then You'll be my God."

There are two things here that we need to look at in depth: First of all, God is just. And being that He's just, He is going to judge, based on truth and knowledge.

For instance, In the New Testament, when Zacharias is told that he is going to have a son and that he is to name him John (Luke 1), Zacharias has doubts and because of that he is made unable to talk for the next 9 months.

But here, Jacob is expressing doubt, and putting conditions on God, and nothing happens to him.

However, in this case, we must remember, Zacharias was a priest. He had been taught the Scriptures from the time he was a little boy.

He knew about God, and He knew that God keeps His Word. Zacharias was a believer and a teacher.. Jacob on the other hand, was a little different.

B. We can tell from the Scriptures that his knowledge of God was limited at best. He wasn't a priest of any kind. He wasn't a teacher of God's Word. In-fact, they didn't even have any Scriptures at this time... They wouldn't until Moses wrote them down by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So Jacob didn't have the luxury of opening his Bible or a scroll and double checking what he had experienced in this dream.

This is important to us because we do have God's Word. The average home in America has something like 3 Bibles in it. Every one of us grew up in a place where the influence of God's Word and the Church was obvious.

Some of you have been in church longer than I've been alive. And we live in a nation where the founding fathers were greatly influenced by the Bible, and Biblical principles and morality.

Luke chapter 12:47-48 reminds us: "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself, or do according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given,

from him much will be required; and to whom much as been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

So right here, Jacob is given a pass, because of his ignorance... later on, more is required of him. But all of us sitting here today, can't claim ignorance. In-fact; if anyone in the United States of America is ignorant about God, it's due to willful ignorance, and willful ignorance is no excuse.

C. The second thing is Jacob's mention of the tithe. The giving of a tenth. Now contrary to what some people might think here, Jacob's not being a cheap skate. He's not saying, "God if you do all this for me, I can manage giving you 1/10th of everything I have."

Because if you look at verse 22 again, you'll notice that he says, "God, all that YOU GIVE me, I will return a tenth to you." In other words, Jacob was saying, **"God if it is You who are giving me these things, and if it's You who are blessing me, Then it's no big deal for me to give back to You a tenth."**

In summary, Jacob might have been a lot of things, but he understood worship, and he understood ownership. He understood that if God gave it, then God could take it away, and he understood that if it was God who was giving it, then that was the only reason he would have it in the first place.

So what you and I have, and what we have been blessed with, is from the Lord. If we have any success in life; we should never, ever think that we are the ones who are responsible for it. God gave us our minds, our ability to work, our health, and everything we have. And we should be thankful and grateful.

Seems like Jacob has given us all something to think about in this passage for the coming year. Let us all resolve to ponder these things in our hearts much like we saw Mary do in the Christmas message.

Let us come to the Lord in prayer..