

In the name of our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹⁰Jacob set out from Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and decided to spend the night there, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from that place, put it under his head, and lay down to sleep in that place. ¹²He had a dream in which he saw a stairway set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. There were angels of God ascending and descending on it. ¹³There at the top stood the LORD, who said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you are lying, I give to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. ¹⁵Now, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back again into this land. Indeed, I will not leave you, until I have done what I have promised to you.”

¹⁶Jacob woke up from his sleep, and he said, “Certainly the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷He 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.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

Did you notice that the three scripture lessons for today all have to do with traveling? Our gospel lesson was about Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem and then to the cross and how Satan used Peter to try and keep Jesus from completing his journey.

Our second lesson was about the believer’s journey through life – the journey we are on right now. Paul points out that during this journey we might have difficulties that produce suffering but our Lord would help us persevere through our suffering. This lesson is tied to our Gospel lesson as Paul points us to the journey Christ made to the cross as the one thing that brings peace to our hearts and the sure hope of eternal life as we journey through life.

Our Old Testament lesson is about Jacob’s journey from Beersheba to Haran. Jacob’s journey is a journey of necessity. He is suffering the consequences of his sin of deception and is now feeling somewhat isolated as he flees 500 miles to the north – to his uncle’s house.

At this point Jacob is probably wondering whether God had abandoned him because of his sinfulness. He needed some reassurance that God was still watching over him and God, who always knows what we need, came to Jacob in a dream. God assured him that he had not abandoned him and that God was with him as he moved forward in life. God then points ahead to the blessings that will come to Jacob as a believer – including the blessings that will come as a result of Christ making his journey to the cross.

This portion of scripture also assures us that as we travel through life we may at times feel alone but **“As Christians, we are never alone,”** because **“We benefit from the very same promises”** and **“We benefit from the blessings that God gave Jacob.”**

I. When Jacob made this journey, he was about 40 years old. He had not planned on making this trip but it came as a result of his own sinful actions. God had promised the line of the Savior

would come from Jacob's descendants and thus he would receive the special blessing passed down from father to son. This was unusual because normally that blessing would go to the oldest son which, in this case, was Esau. But God had decided differently and not only did Jacob know this but his father, Isaac, also knew which son was to get the blessing. But Jacob had a weak faith and was impatient and he knew his father favored Esau. He decided to take matters into his own hands. He tricked his father into giving him the blessing and that's when Jacob found out when you don't follow God's plan, it can create all kinds of trouble.

Esau was not happy with what Jacob did and said he would kill Jacob after their father had died. Jacob had to flee for his life and so his mother sent him to Haran to live with his uncle for a while and maybe find a God fearing wife. Jacob left quickly. Most likely he had only the clothes on his back, his staff, and maybe a little food. He had about 500 miles to travel and had only gone about 70 miles, maybe 2 or 3 days into his journey, when he once again stopped for the night.

How do you think Jacob felt as he walked along? Guilty, all alone, sorry, repentant, foolish because he had not trusted God and listened to him? As he lay down to sleep that night, he might have been wondering where his relationship with God now stood.

God was about to let Jacob know in what direction his life was headed. **“[Jacob] 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. ¹³ There above it stood the LORD”**

What a wonderful picture of the constant communication and fellowship that exists between God and his people. God is never out of touch. We speak to him in prayer and he speaks to us through his Word. In the days of Jacob, God also used angels as his messengers and in this picture, God himself is standing at the top of the stairs with a message for Jacob. A message of promise and encouragement to guide, direct, and protect him. God certainly was patient with Jacob and in this way assured him of his forgiveness and that God would continue to travel with him on his journey through life.

God's promise and reassurance is for us also. Many people, and this may include some of you, suffer from loneliness? They feel isolated – maybe disconnected from society, forgotten and forsaken. To feel all alone is depressing and sometimes even frightening. But even worse, a lot have disconnected themselves from God. They want to be self-sufficient and don't want God's help or maybe think their problems are too much for God to take care of. It's ironic that people sometimes reject the very one who can help them.

We can always count on God and his promises, especially his promise, **“Never will I leave you, Never will I forsake you.”** Even when we feel all alone, God is with us. Even when we do foolish things, like Jacob did, and destroy or damage the relationships we have on this earth, our God is here to help us pick up the pieces. As we come confessing our sins he reminds us that his Son has paid for those sins and our faith brings that forgiveness to us. He comes to us through his Word to remind us that our relationship with him is still intact and to strengthen that relationship and assure us of the promises and blessings that are ours as a member of God's family.

II. That is what God did for Jacob. He reminded him of the promises and blessings that were his:

1. He and his descendants would possess this land from which from which now he was practically in exile.
2. The people descended from him would be very numerous and will spread in every direction even though he had not yet married.
3. In him and a great descendant (Galatians 3:16) all the families of the earth would be blessed.
4. The Lord would never forsake him in all his wanderings but would protect him and bring him back to this land.

Jacob woke from his dream and from this vision with mixed emotions. His first thought was how great it was that God had come to him when he was not expecting it but then we are told he was afraid. Just imagine if you God had come to you in the same way. How would you feel? I think we would marvel that God had also talked to us unexpectedly but we might feel the same fear Jacob felt.

Jacob knew he was sinful. It was sin that got him into this predicament in the first place. We also recognize our sinfulness and how often we cause our own problems. That might cause us to fear God who demands perfection from us, but then we remember our Savior's journey to the cross. He made that journey so that we could stand before God in wonder and amazement. As we focus on the cross we see our Savior's love and that moves us to repent of our sins and receive the forgiveness that our gracious God wants us to have. Then we can truly rejoice in the blessing of forgiveness and the assurance that God loves us and we are never alone.

We have the promises of our God to hold onto and encourage us also. The Lord is concerned about us and pays attention to each and every one of our needs. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, **“My sheep (that's us) listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand”** (John 10:27- 28)

We live in a world that is mobile – people are always traveling. As we journey through life we may have times when we feel all alone – when we feel forgotten. Our Lord reminds us that we are never alone. He is always with us. We have his promises and his blessings to remind us of that each and every day. Amen.