

## 2021.01.24 Sunday Sermon <Enlightenment in The Wilderness>

### **Psalm 130:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> *I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.*

<sup>6</sup> *I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

<sup>7</sup> *Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.*

### **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 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>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." <sup>16</sup> When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." <sup>18</sup> Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.*

<sup>20</sup> *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear <sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God <sup>22</sup> and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*

It is already near end of January. Time flies so fast. Today I want to speak about Jacob's findings at wilderness of Harran. Let us look at the image on the screen - *Jacob's Dream* by Jose de Ribera. While sleeping, Jacob meets the Lord. Through this dream, Jacob realizes and truly experiences the Lord. Our current environment feels like the wilderness Jacob faced in Harran. I hope through today's message, we may experience the Lord just as Jacob did in his dream.

### **1. God Is Alive**

From the dream, Jacob experiences and realizes God is truly alive. The same Lord that appeared to his grandfather and his father came to Jacob.

- **Genesis 28:16**

<sup>16</sup> *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."*

- **Genesis 28:13**

<sup>13</sup> *There above it 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."*

Throughout Jacob's life, the Lord appears to him seven times. Each time the Lord comes to Jacob when he is in difficulty, which shows us that the Lord never took his eyes off of Jacob.

Clarence Seward Darrow (April 18, 1857 – March 13, 1938) was an American lawyer who became famous in the early 20th century for his involvement in the Leopold and Loeb murder trial and the Scopes "Monkey" Trial. He was a leading member of the American Civil Liberties Union, and a prominent advocate for Georgist economic reform. In 1930, during the Great Depression, he gave a speech and said, "If God existed, would we be in this Great Depression? As we suffer through this financial crisis, it is clear God do not exist."

One day, Darrow was giving a similar speech and said, "We have lost everything. Our dreams and hope are all gone. How can we sing a song when we are in this situation?" One African American lady raised her hand and said, "I can sing." Rest of the audience followed her and said, "Yes, I can sing because of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!" Darrow was shocked to see the audience react. These people showed their faith because they have met the Lord during the challenging times and knew God was alive and is watching over them.

There is a Korean praise called *Two Disciples Going to Emmaus*. I would like to share the lyrics:

*When two disciples going to a village called Emmaus were in despair and horror  
Lord Jesus came up to them, and showed true hope  
On the way we are living in the world, on the way to Emmaus,  
Endless sorrow stands before us, but I believe Lord Jesus shows up to us and gives new hope*

My brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus is with us right now and watching over us. Lord Jesus provides hope when we are in darkness.

## 2. God Loves Me

While in wilderness, Jacob thought the Lord was punishing him for all of his wrongdoings (lying to his own father and taking inheritance from his brother due to his selfishness). However, instead of punishment, the Lord blesses Jacob. We see this in verse 14 of today's scripture. In following verse 15, we see the word "you" six times - showing how much the Lord truly loves Jacob.

- **Genesis 28:14**

<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.*

- **Genesis 28:15**

<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."*

During the Gold Rush (1848 - 1855), a man left his family from New York to San Francisco to find success. After a long period, he called his wife and children to come to San Francisco. Unfortunately, a fire broke on the boat and only certain amount of people could get on the lifeboat. The mother decided to only let her children get on the lifeboat. She told her son, "Live and find your father. Tell him that I died on behalf of you." The lifeboat symbolized the love this mother had for her children.

Similar to the lifeboat, the ladder mentioned on today's scripture shows the love the Lord had for Jacob. For us, just like the ladder, the cross of Jesus Christ symbolizes the love Lord Father has for us. Through this cross, the heavenly gate opened for all of us.

*God is so good  
God is so good  
God is so good  
He's so good to me*

Through His love, we can be strong and withstand anything.

## 3. Serve God Well

In today's scripture, we also see the transformation of Jacob. A selfish person who lied to his own father and ran away from home, became fearful of the Lord Almighty. We see this transformation in verses 17 - 19.

- **Genesis 28:17**  
<sup>17</sup> *He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."*
- **Genesis 28:18-19**  
<sup>18</sup> *Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.*

Jacob only knew how to receive or take. He never knew what giving meant. Yet on verse 22, we see him building a place of worship and giving an offering to the Lord. It is not the offering we want to focus, but the fact that Jacob has transformed and willingly to give offering to the Lord. He realized the Lord is alive and experienced the Lord love for him.

- **Genesis 28:22**  
<sup>22</sup> *and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*
- **Genesis 28:20-21**  
<sup>20</sup> *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear <sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God*
- **Genesis 48:15**  
*Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,*

Through this difficult period in wilderness, God has shown so much to Jacob. He not only realized the Lord is alive and His love is so great...but made him transform himself to be a faithful servant of the Lord.

There was a boy who was a constant troublemaker at school. The father tried everything...spent time with his son, read the Bible to his son every night, but nothing helped. One day the son was playing with a ball inside his room and crushed the windows. Father came to the room with a leather belt and told his son, "Hit me seven times." The son cried and said no but the Father told him again to hit him. First two times the son hit his father lightly, but the father asked him to hit him harder. After hitting him seven time the father said, " Jesus received beating because of our sins. The Lord sent His one and only Son to come and save us." After this incident, slowly the son changed. This transformation is similar to the transformation we saw in Jacob.

#### **In Summary:**

Jacob's situation is similar to what we are faced with currently. As Jacob found enlightenment in wilderness, let us also find enlightenment during this difficult period.

- **God is alive**
- **God loves me**
- **Let's serve God well**