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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
August 3, 2014  
8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Acts 14:8-8 Matthew 13:44-46

Hymns: 744; 243; 53; 38:4 (38:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Genesis 28:10-22

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. 12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. 20 Then Jacob made a vow,

saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: We know Jacob as a patriarch of our faith.

In the 46<sup>th</sup> psalm, absolutely one of my favorites, we read:

**Psalm 46:1,7** God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ... The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.

We often find ourselves in trouble in this life. Jacob did too. Much of our trouble is of our own making. Jacob’s was too. Other troubles come just because we live in a world that has been corrupted by sin. Either way, it doesn’t matter, when we are in trouble we have the God of Jacob on our side and by our side.

At the time of our text Jacob was in trouble, the worst trouble he had yet faced in his life. He had been living up to his name. Jacob’s name meant usurper or cheater. Twice Jacob had cheated his brother Esau out of the blessing Esau thought was rightfully his, and which their father, Isaac intended to give to Esau. Rebecca wanted the blessing to go to Jacob. Jacob and Rebecca decided to go after this blessing for Jacob even if it meant deceiving a blind old man, and cheating Esau, who could be a dangerous man. They didn’t trust God to fulfill His express will in this matter. They were going to take matters into their own hands.

The result was trouble that grew out of sin. Sin breeds sin and contempt and bitterness and trouble. Jacob ended up running for his life. He was in the worst trouble of his life, and it was of his own making. Not only had he wronged his father and his brother; he had wronged God! He had

meddled in God's business! He had tried to be smarter than God making sure that things turned out the way they were supposed to turn out, at least according to Jacob.

Jacob, the deceiver, the cheater, had messed everything up. He was on the run, about seventy miles from home, when he once again stopped for the night at a place called Luz. He found a big rock to lean up against kind of like a pillow, and went to sleep for the night. While he slept God presented His truth to Jacob in a dream, that familiar dream of the ladder to heaven. This is a significant event, not only in the life of Jacob because of what he learned that night, but for each of us as well.

## **THEME: Jacob's Dream Illustrates Our Covenant Relationship with God.**

In this remarkable dream Jacob got to see –

### **I. God's Revealed Presence.**

**Genesis 28:12-13** Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac;

The connection between God and man is not one accomplished by man. The LORD appeared to Jacob. The LORD declared His identity. The LORD revealed Himself to Jacob. He would appear to Jacob again on other occasions, but this appearance established the relationship that Jacob the Usurper would have with the LORD, the covenant God from this time forward. Jacob had been in trouble. Jacob had been on the run alone in the wilderness with an extremely long and dangerous journey before him as he traveled to the home of his Uncle Laban. Jacob's life had been filled with uncertainty on every level because of his foolish and arrogant sin.

Then the LORD came to Jacob in this dream, and announced to Jacob that the LORD who was God to Abraham Jacob's grandfather, and Isaac, Jacob's father, was not also to be God to Jacob for his life also. This was a personal relationship with the Lord. This personal relationship was not personal because this was Jacob's inclination, that he had somehow decided to be a better

God-fearing man. Not at all. This was a personal relationship with God because God choose Jacob. God choose Jacob before Jacob was born, and had promised that Jacob would be the brother who was to be blessed by the Lord. All this was included in the fact that God revealed His true identity to Jacob.

God has so also chosen you. He has chosen to reveal Himself to you as the God of our fathers. He has chosen to reveal Himself to us as the one true God who made all, the heavens, the earth and all that it contains. This God has chosen us to be His own special people. This is not because we are better than the rest of the world. It is not because God saw that we would be more tolerant of His truth, more accepting of His truth than others. No, we like Jacob, are trouble makers, usurpers, cheaters, sinners all! We are no better than the rest of the world. We are just as deserving of eternal judgment as anyone, and not deserving of the grace that has been revealed in us.

That is the lesson that Jacob received about --

## **II. God's Covenant Grace.**

God came to Jacob with promises, not demands.

**Genesis 28: 13-14** “The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God came to Jacob, the cheater, the deceiver with these wondrous promises! If they sound familiar they should! These are the promises first given to Abraham. These are the promises of the birthright, that is the spiritual birthright which Esau had despised, which Jacob had coveted and endeavored to steal away from Esau. But Jacob could not steal that which was the LORD's to give. All Jacob had accomplished was a clear demonstration of how undeserving he was of the covenant promises. And yet God in His grace presented these wonderful promises to Jacob. Jacob's descendants would possess the land where he slept that night. His descendants would be as the dust of the earth. His descendants

would spread abroad to the west and east and to the north and south, yes throughout the world. We see here that the LORD was including Jacob's spiritual descendants as well as his physical descendants.

The greatest honor, the greatest blessing is found in the special Descendant that would come from Jacob's line. That special Seed, which is Christ, was the One who would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. God, the LORD, our covenant God, would send forth the Savior to deliver a fallen mankind from sin and the death that it brings upon all men. This would come to us through Jacob, the liar, the deceiver, the usurper. This is God's grace.

To assure the fulfillment of these promises God piled on the blessings for Jacob's life.

**Genesis 28:15** "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

God promised to be with him and keep him, and bring Jacob back again to the land of promise. Oh, it would be a while, decades would pass, but the Lord is faithful, and He would not leave Jacob. He fulfilled all that He promised to do!

What a wonder of grace that we also have been blessed by the Lord. What a wonder of grace comes to us in all our ways because God fulfilled these promises made to Jacob, made also for us. We are the beneficiaries of the covenant of God's peace that was fulfilled by the coming of Jacob's Seed. We live at peace with God because that Seed of Jacob came into the world and took our sins away. We live under God's protection every bit as much as Jacob did, even though we are as undeserving of this blessing of God's grace and love and mercy as anyone. This is when we come to a glorious understanding of just how wonderful and gracious our God is, because the words of the psalmist that I quoted earlier, those words are there for us even as the grace of God was there for Jacob.

**Psalm 46:1,7** God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ... The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.

In the remainder of our text we are taught of --

### **III. Faith's Response to God's Grace.**

**Genesis 28:16-19** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! 18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

Yes, Jacob then knew the LORD as he had never known Him before. The Lord had appeared to Abraham and to Isaac, and then He also revealed Himself in this intimate way to Jacob. Jacob was moved, not just emotionally, but changed spiritually. He was brought by the LORD to a fuller realization of God's grace, and Jacob's faith life was ignited. His life was now that spiritual pilgrimage that leads us to recognize Jacob as the patriarch of our faith. He would remember that place and that encounter, his first close encounter with God, for the rest of his life. That place would be a spiritual place to Jacob. As he acknowledged it to be the House of God, and so Jacob named the place Bethel.

I hope and pray that we each can appreciate the revelation of God's grace to us as much as Jacob did. I hope and pray that the place where God reveals Himself to us in such an intimate grace would be a place we would desire to visit often, a place where we would come to worship the Lord.

Now before you start to argue that the Lord appeared to Jacob in a far more excellent way that He has with us, allow me to take exception with such thoughts. Have you been baptized? Then you have been baptized into Jesus' death! Have you come to the Lord's Table for Holy Communion? Then the Lord has come to you in a most personal and yes, intimate way that you might know

the covenant of His peace! Let us also exclaim with Jacob, “**How awesome is this place!**”

**Genesis 28:18-22** 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

If we were to interpret this as Jacob trying to make another deal, trying another of his schemes, this time trying to pull a fast one over on God, we would be completely missing the impact this event had on Jacob. He finally comprehended the grace of God, a grace that came with God’s presence in his life. He was then able to continue his journey in peace, the peace that comes with sins forgiven. This peace was also the assurance of faith that God the LORD, would be true to His Word and covenant.

May we also take a look at our lives and see the evidence of God’s grace, and the evidence of God’s faithfulness, and the evidence of God’s continued blessing. May we as children of God, realize we are what we are by the grace of God. It is the LORD who has come to us with His covenant of peace, and keeps us in His peace during our earthly pilgrimage until He receives us into the promised land of heaven. Truly our spiritual heritage is that which David treasured, that heritage of our spiritual patriarch Jacob.

**Psalms 46:7** The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.