

CALL TO WORSHIP - JACOB'S LADDER

Come on in
This is the place for you.

Are you a dreamer? Yes?
Then bring your dreams.
Terrifying or confusing – inspiring, clear

there are angels in them. We'll look for those angels together.
They are surely looking for us.

Are you running away? Yes?
Run here for a moment. Rest – lay your head on a stone.
You might not recognize it, but the stone will yield water, you can hide yourself in its cleft,
or build a house on it. Stones are good like that.

This is a good place for you if you're running away.

Do you wonder about the future? Yes?
This is the very place for you.
Here – a ladder joins past and future
in one electrifying moment called now.
Filled with angels and the very presence of God.

So come – bring your dreams and your questions – what you're running from and what you're running
toward....
this is the place where earth and heaven meet
this – where you are right now – is the very house of God.
And there are angels – everywhere!

And this is what they're singing

HOLY HOLY HOLY

JACOB'S DREAM
GENESIS 28
July 19, 2020

Whatever else this dream is
however this passage speaks
whatever else might be the Word we receive from it today

this is the story of the free, undeserved, unasked for
amazing, life-giving, dream-fulfilling and dream producing Grace of God.

And it's held out for us today as a gift – this story of grace.
It is itself a ladder with angels all over it
it's the place where earth and heaven meet
inviting US to become a ladder too....where earth meets heaven

Wouldn't THAT be fun to pursue? What if WE ourselves are that ladder?
One school of dream interpretation says that every character in a dream, every part of a dream is part of
the dreamer
so – what might it look like to you if you are the ladder? –
Are you a rickety old wooden one needing some paint? Do you have a few rungs missing? Or a Metal
one – a step ladder? A modern high tech one?
And those
angels - everywhere. Is that you too? What part of you is an angel on that ladder?

You know that feeling you get on your skin sometimes...a shiver, an unexplained tickle...

It's poetry. I know that. I do. But it's so cool to play with it with that part of us that's not rational...the
dreamer in us. I think the text calls for that.

You know, that whole idea of us as the ladder....might not be so far off. Just follow me here....

These stories are old....ancient.....told and told again by story tellers long before they were written
down. Precious and foundational to generations of people who learned who they were, who God is, and
what life was about
learned those things by these stories.

Like all good Spirit filled stories, they mean what the Spirit intends, and the listener needs them to
mean at any given time...
and that changes. These stories are flexible, durable, multi faceted....like jewels.

And
by the time people wrote them down
the people were settled
and worship – true worship – according to the elite of the day
was at the Temple
and nowhere else
The Temple in Jerusalem was the place where earth and heaven meet

the only place

So....to retell, to record this account in that situation.....what does this story say in that context?

Or later when the temple had been destroyed and the people wondered where was God now, or WAS there even a God, and had they been wrong to believe so naively
Because surely the world had taught them that
Either there's one right place to worship
Or there's nothing at all

And the story begins to speak to a whole new generation and

It says NO.

It's a story that challenges that dominant narrative, the one that sought to control and prescribe where and how people experienced the Holy – you can't do that!
And - tried to control and prescribe – if you can imagine such arrogance – control and prescribe how The Holy One comes to us.

God can drop a ladder ANYWHERE!!

And in fact you ARE the ladder – you ARE the place where earth and heaven meet. You've always been. Surely God has been here all along – and we didn't know it!

We'd better get to the story now.

What we have here is Jacob – you have to know his backstory or this doesn't make sense.
Jacob has just left home.
Not only left home - but LEFT HOME. Run away.
Fled for his life.

His brother Esau had sworn to kill him.

Why?

For tricking their father and cheating him (Esau) out of his inheritance.

Isaac their father (the boys are twins but you'd never know it) Isaac their father is old, has lost his sight, and is tricked by Jacob and their mother Rebecca into bestowing his deathbed blessing on Jacob instead of on Esau, whose blessing it was by right. He was the firstborn.

Esau discovers the deception of course, and asks one of the most heart-wrenching questions in all of scripture?

HAVE YOU ONLY ONE BLESSING, FATHER? (and THAT'S a whole sermon that I don't have time to preach)

Esau is heartbroken, and then – he gets mad. Angry, as you would.
He threatens to kill Jacob
Jacob takes off to save his own life

and it's here we find him.

10-19 again

What are we to make of this?

For today may I suggest

- this is not about Jacob, not really.
it's about you. And me. And life. This world. THIS world.

it's about families and how strange and hurtful family life can be
how to be parents in an uncertain world
how to be parents period.

it's about times when you've felt cut off – from your family - from a sense of purpose, from what you
believed was rightfully yours....
cut off perhaps by your own actions
and how hard it is to figure out how – or if – to return and what that would mean

It's about finding ourselves unexpectedly in a place of awe and wonder –
those times – I don't know about you but often rare times
when you experience the Holy
I don't mean through your head, or after trying to pray....

but the Holy when God comes to you kind of out of the blue, as it werein ways you didn't ask for,
didn't anticipate, don't understand, can't explain
but are all the more real for that.

maybe more real than anything in your life.
Sometimes in dreams. Sometimes in that half-light between sleep and waking
sometimes in meditation, prayer...
sometimes just – bam – right in front of you in ways you can't explain.
No wonder scripture turns to story and poetry.
Those times.

It's about times of being so aware of our own failures and faults that it almost overwhelms us
and it's about dreams.

Dreams, for when you've nearly forgotten the promise.
Dreams that come when you need them most and expect them least.

Experiences that suddenly join earth to heaven in a way that makes you realize they've always been
joined, and you just didn't know it.

Because God can drop a ladder anywhere. Any time.

This is an assurance that there are second chances
and that what we've done in the past need not define us

that heaven and earth are closer than you knew, and both of them are in you.

We're about to move to the table.

And what we're doing here

is rehearsing

rehearsing for the time when the world will be as one

when heaven and earth will be one

and we'll all sit together

and everyone will be loved and welcome and cherished and there will be enough for all of us. ALL OF US.

On earth as it is in heaven.

That's not how it is now

but we're practising.

And one day, please God – one day practice will make perfect.

I wish for you a life of dreaming

dreams that will come to you when you need them most

to remind you of the old old promise - that's it's true. And it's for yourself

And I pray that when your life is most hurtful and frightening

and when you're running from what you've done

and have no idea where you're going...

in a lonely desert place

I wish for you a rock

and a dream.

And that you'll wake and know that the place where you are is Holy

that there are angels and ladders

and holiness all around

and the place where earth and heaven meet is right – exactly – where you are.