

Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

25/10/2020 - Genesis 28

Blessings at Bethel



All lockdown services can be found at: www.mbccs.co.uk

"You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessings and prosperity will be yours". **Psalm 128:2**

Good morning and welcome to this week's message.

**Today we have hymn and children's song
"Take My Life And Let It Be" & "We Are Climbing Jacobs Ladder"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfI1rReeWIs> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNCGs6bRE6U>

Take My Life and Let It Be

- 1 Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
- 2 Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
- 3 Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
- 4 Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use,
Every power as Thou shalt choose.
- 5 Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.
- 6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

We Are Climbing Jacobs Ladder

1. We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
We are climbing Jacob's ladder,
Soldiers of the cross.
2. Ev'ry round goes higher, higher,
Ev'ry round goes higher, higher,
Ev'ry round goes higher, higher,
Soldiers of the cross.
3. Children, do you love my Jesus?
Children, do you love my Jesus?
Children, do you love my Jesus?
Soldiers of the cross.
4. If you love him, why not serve him?
If you love him, why not serve him?
If you love him, why not serve him?
Soldiers of the cross.
5. Rise, shine, give God glory,
Rise, shine, give God glory,
Rise, shine, give God glory,
Soldiers of the cross



Our reading today is Genesis 28: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28&version=NIV>

Today we learn about Jacob's dream commonly called "Jacob's ladder".

Last week as we thought about choices. Esau choose to give up his birthright to his younger brother Jacob. In the next chapters we learn of Isaac as an old man who was dying and was going to give his blessing to Esau. But Jacob, Esau's brother, tricked his father into giving him the blessing instead. Esau, understandably, was livid about this because he was to inherit nothing from Isaac as a result. So, in 27:41, Esau says, "The time to mourn my father's death is near; then I will kill Jacob." Rebecca, Esau and Jacob's mother, overheard what Esau said and warned Jacob and told him to go and stay with his uncle in Haran until Esau's anger cooled off.

So Jacob leaves home and flees for his life. And that's where we pick up the story. Jacob is running for his life; he is scared, tired, lonely, he is carrying deep pain inside, feeling guilty, feeling remorseful for what he has done. Jacob is in a dark, dark place. Essentially, Jacob needs a healing experience from God and this passage goes on to tell us something of what it means for us to receiving that healing touch from God in our lives.

For all of us, life is a Journey. We come from God and we are journeying back to him. We are all on a journey from the cradle to the grave. But at times in our lives, we seem to lose our way on our journey.

As the story unfolds, we see that Jacob is suffering the same predicament. The story starts, "Jacob left Beersheba and started towards Haran. At sunset, he came to a certain place and camped there."

The wording of this is so important for us. Jacob was on a journey: he was going from Beersheba – to Haran. When the dream happened, he was in a "certain place". A place with no name; an anonymous area. His journey had come to a temporary halt. He was languishing and tired in some unknown place. Jacob was not expecting anything to happen. He had no desire to meet with God at this point in his life. His only concern was survival. He was running away from his brother Esau who wanted to kill him.

As Jacob settled in this place with no name, he rested his head on a stone and that's when he saw this ladder, it was in a dream. This picture of Jacob reflects the life situation of some of us, perhaps. Tired, scared, with the spirit of adventure knocked out of us. Perhaps some of us do not feel in control of our own destiny at the moment...we are on our journey through life and we currently find ourselves at this certain place, which may be an uncomfortable place to be. We may be feeling just too tired or frightened to do anything about it...or not know what to do about it or maybe feel unworthy to have God sort us out...Like Jacob, we find ourselves at this certain place that we don't know or understand.

In the reading this is the time when God chooses to meet with Jacob and brings healing to him and encourages him into a life of faith. There is an encounter here between Jacob and God. And that, ultimately, is what healing is: it is a personal encounter with the Living God. But what might that encounter look like?

This story of Jacob has a beautiful picture in it - the picture of a stairway from heaven to earth and there are angels ascending and descending. It's a beautiful picture of how heaven comes down to meet us here on earth. It's a beautiful picture of an incredible truth: that earth can be linked to heaven: that there really is a "Stairway to Paradise": a way for us to have a relationship with God that is real and alive. It demonstrates how we are united to God forever.

This story as previously stated is known as Jacob's Ladder. However, the Ladder is not the important point at all. What completely revolutionises Jacob's life is not the Ladder but what God says to him. The Ladder is just the introduction. What counts is the promise that God makes to Jacob.

In this passage from Genesis 28, there is a 3-fold Promise from God to Jacob: The Promise of Presence: vs. 15: "I will be with you"; The Promise of Protection: vs. 15: "I will protect you wherever you go"; The Promise of Blessing: vs. 14: "Through you I will bless all nations". The Word of God to Jacob, the Word of God to each one of us today is the same: God promises to be present with us through our trials in life, God promises to protect us in our most vulnerable times, God promises to

pour out abundant blessings on our lives. Healing begins when we receive this word from God, when we encounter God's presence, protection and blessing.

We have thought about Jacob being on a Journey. We have noted that God meets with Jacob on his journey. Finally, we note that Jacob makes a response. Its great that God wants to meet with us but its how we respond that counts.

Jacob responded, initially in that anonymous place, no-man's land, this place becomes crucial, vs. 18: "Jacob got up early the next morning, took the stone that was under his head, and set it up as a memorial. Then he poured olive oil on it to dedicate it to God. He named the place Bethel which means House of God".

The place where we find God becomes a holy place. It may be at church but may be somewhere else. People often say, "Ah, church – it's just a building". That is not true. That is not what the Scriptures teach. Where you are today reading this is holy ground. Not because it has been consecrated but because you are with by God and can receive his healing touch right where you are.

Jacob begins this story and we are told he is in 'a certain place'. But by the end of the story, he has been encountered by God and the place has a name: Bethel: House of God. So church can be for us a place of transformation, a place of healing, a place of encounter between us and God.

Jacob first responds by marking the place of encounter.

Jacob then responds by making the promises of God personal to him.

In verses 14 and 15, God had said: "I will be with you, I will protect you, I will bless you". But by verse 20, Jacob had reflected on those promises and internalised them and made them personal to himself. Vs. 20: "If you will be with me and protect me on the journey I am making and give me food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father's home, then you will be my God".

However, Jacob by using the word "if" seems not to be absolutely sure. He is stepping out in faith here. Jacob is still a man full of doubts. That is of very comforting because I know that I am often full of doubts, and perhaps you are too...

A faith that begins "If..." is a faith actively looking for God to do something. It's a faith that is ready to receive, awaiting the activity of God as proof of his love and grace.

So, this passage reminds us that we are all on a journey in life and for this moment, we inhabit this space, this place. This is not an empty or meaningless place; it is holy ground - because this is the place that God has chosen to encounter with you today. He meets with us and offers us the promise of his presence, the promise of his protection and the promise of his blessing in our lives.

Like Jacob, we may still be full of doubts – but that's OK. Our doubts do not negate the promise of God in our lives. The promises of God are greater than our doubts. God's words are as true to us today as they were to Jacob all those years ago: "Remember, I will be with you and protect you wherever you go...I will not leave you until I have done all that I have promised you."

God waits on us today wherever we are. Bethel – Gods House – is right here. So, we come with our faith, and with our doubts and we ask God to bless us and to journey with us so that we know His blessings today and forever.



Let's pray.

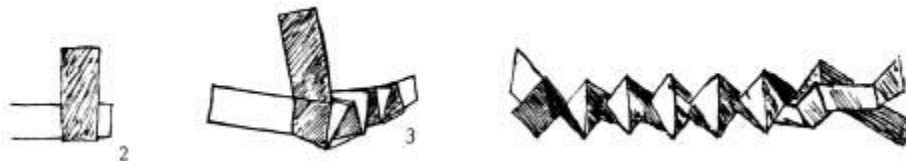
Dear God,

Thank You for providing a way for us to get to heaven. Thank you that I am in your house – Bethel – wherever I am and that you shed your blessings on me. Help us to respond to you as we encounter your presence.

Amen

Make Jacob's Ladder

Jacob's Ladder Paper Chain



1. Cut two strips of paper 1" wide and about 20" long.
2. Lay the strips perpendicular to each other and overlap at one end and then glue or staple these ends together.
3. Taking the strip at rear, fold it over the front strip. Then take the second strip and fold it forward over the first. Continue folding until the entire length is folded according to the illustration. To finish the chain, glue the ends.
4. Pull the ends to open the ladder.



May God's blessing surround you each day.

As we trust in and walk in His way;

May His presence within,

Guard and keep us from sin;

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.