

Sunday, October 16, 2022 – Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 121

5 – The Lord watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

7 – The Lord will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

8 – The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel - Genesis 28: 10-22

10-17 - Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. He dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. The LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that 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 promised you." Then Jacob woke, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

When in your life have you had an experience where you felt so strongly the presence of God that you would say, along with Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it"? When have you been most overwhelmed – most surprised – by the presence of God?

18-22 - So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you."

Often in the Bible people made a pile of stones or set a stone up as a pillar to commemorate the times and places where they especially encountered God.

What have been those times, places, and experiences for you?

Jacob called his place/experience Bethel (House of God). What would you call your place/experience?

What do you think/how do you feel about Jacob's bargaining with God and setting conditions for the Lord's being his God?

When have you bargained with God? What was that experience like for you? How did it turn out for you?

Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau - Genesis 32: 9-21

9-12 - Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and of my father Isaac, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,' I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us

all, the mothers with the children. Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.'"

Notice the very different way that Jacob is talking to God now from the way he talked in Genesis 28.

What are the circumstances and experiences in your life that made your prayer conversations with God change that dramatically?

13-21 - So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau. These he delivered into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on ahead of me, and put a space between drove and drove. When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, 'To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?' then you shall say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind us.'" For he thought, "I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he will accept me." So the present passed on ahead of him; and he himself spent that night in the camp.

What do you think about Jacob's efforts to appease his brother Esau?

When have you been as desperate in your attempts to appease someone? What was the result? When have you had to do the equivalent of "(spending) that night in the camp"?

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel: Genesis 32: 22-32

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

When in your life have you wrestled with God? What was the issue? What was the end result? One person said, "My wrestling with God is one wrestling match that I always want to lose."

When has God intentionally held back in His relationship with you so that He did not overwhelm you?

When have you said to God, "I will not let you go unless you bless me"?

How would you complete this sentence? "God, I will not let you go until or unless you . . ."

People in the Bible often changed their names after they had had a life-changing experience. For example, Jacob (heel grasper, tricker, deceiver) was changed to Israel (one who wrestles and struggles with God).

What for you have been those life-changing experiences that would warrant a change in name?

Jacob called the place Peniel, because he had seen God face to face.

What places for you are Peniel, where you have seen God face to face?

From this moment on, whenever Jacob took a step, he remembered this encounter with God. Where and when have you experienced a wounding in your life that will always remind you of a life-changing experience and/or an encounter with God?

What do you think about the statement, "God always wounds us in just the right places"?