

Opening Prayer:

People: Help us to listen to the groans in our midst, O God: creation's groans of labour pains, our neighbour's groans of loneliness, the groans that we bring, with trepidation and awe. We come bringing the yearnings that are on our hearts this day. Draw us into your waiting presence where we can learn how to wait as you wait: eagerly, hopefully, joyfully, for our holiness to grow and our chaff to be burned away in the brilliant fire of the Spirit. Amen.

Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:

Children's Hymn: "Deep and Wide" (2X)

Deep and wide, deep and wide,
There's a fountain flowing deep and wide;
Deep and wide, deep and wide,
There's a fountain flowing deep and wide; **

Scripture: Genesis 28: 10 - 19

Jacob left the town of Beersheba and started out for Haran. At sunset he stopped for the night and went to sleep, resting his head on a large rock. In a dream he saw a ladder that reached from earth to heaven, and God's angels were going up and down on it. The Lord was standing beside the ladder and said: I am the Lord God who was worshiped by Abraham and Isaac. I will give to you and your family the land on which you are now sleeping. Your descendants will spread over the earth in all directions and will become as numerous as the specks of dust. Your family will be a blessing to all people. Wherever you go, I will watch over you, then later I will bring you back to this land. I won't leave you—I will do all I have promised. Jacob woke up suddenly and thought, "The Lord is in this place, and I didn't even know it." Then Jacob became frightened and said, "What a frightening place! It must be the house of God and the gateway to heaven." When Jacob got up early the next morning, he took the rock that he had used for a pillow and stood it up as a place of worship. Then he poured olive oil on the rock to dedicate it to God, and he named the place Bethel.

Reflection: "The Ladder"

We continue the story of Jacob, who has extorted his brother Esau's birthright for a bowl of soup or stew. The story continued to devolve from there. With his mother Rebekah's help (remember, Rebekah favoured Jacob while Isaac favoured Esau), Jacob next intentionally deceived his father to receive the blessing Isaac intended for his elder son, Esau. As a result, Esau planned to kill his brother. And Jacob? Jacob fled for his life. His scheming to obtain birthright and blessing left him homeless and on the run. But the irony is - the destination of his flight was Haran – the place where his grandparents Abraham and Sarah first demonstrated trust in God by setting out on their promise-driven journey. For Jacob, it is as if he, too, needs to go back to the beginning – and learn what it means not to scheme but to trust.

God of course goes with Jacob. We too trust that God travels with us as we journey into the future. May we feel the gift of God's presence with us. May we be willing to follow God as we are led.

Do we understand that God is with us, even when we do not understand how or why? Like Jacob, we too can be on an ongoing journey of grasping God's presence in our day to day activities in our daily lives. Jacob has proven to be self-interested and cunning, not a person for whom we would want to be great friends with. Jacob once again has cheated Esau, this time out of their father's blessing. Esau is not happy and is looking for Jacob to teach him a lesson – maybe even a permanent lesson.

With the help of Rebekah, Jacob flees from home in order to avoid Esau's fury. Jacob heads to Haran, where he has family – some uncles and aunts and cousins. He travels in hope that he might find a wife and settle there. After putting as much distance as possible between himself and his brother, he settles down for the night. He rests his head on a stone and falls into a dream-filled sleep.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, dreams were considered visions and messages from God. Jacob dreams of a ladder with angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth, a sign that this was a "thin place," a gateway between heaven and earth. While angels were often seen as God's messengers, these particular angels were not. They do not speak on God's behalf. God speaks directly to Jacob. God's promise to Abraham (Jacob's grandfather) of land and a multitude of descendants is restated. Additionally, God promises to be with Jacob always and reassures him that he will return home one day. The words God speaks to Jacob in his dream are, "I am with you," "I will keep you wherever you go," "I will not leave you". These are the same words God has spoke to Isaac and Abraham, so Jacob inherits the promise given to his family.

Waking up awestruck by the dream, Jacob takes the stone that has been his pillow, anoints it with oil, and forms an altar. He calls the place Bethel, House of God. He promises that as God is faithful to him, so he will be faithful to God.

Where have you experienced "thin places" – those places where heaven and earth seem to merge? Do you find that place sacred? According to today's story in Genesis, it is at Bethel where heaven and earth meet. God comes to Jacob in a dream and provides him assurance and blessings.

Jacob was awestruck when he awoke from his dream. There was such of a deep connection with God that he had experienced - that it surely unsettled and unnerved him. It may have even frightened Jacob. Have you experienced this kind of Awe?

In worship today, may we find God offering gentle reassurance – “I am with you,” “I will keep you wherever you go,” “I will not leave you.” God assures us with the same promises God gave to Jacob. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 497 “Nearer My God to Thee”

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Though, like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

There let the way appear, steps unto heaven;
all that thou sendest me, in mercy given;
angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
so by my woes to be nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Or if on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
sun, moon, and stars forgot, upwards I fly,
still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee! **

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Thank You for all your gifts. Your gifts of time, talent, skills, prayers and money. All of these gifts added together, makes us the Church. We as givers are so blessed we can give. May those who receive - also know they are blessed. Thank you for being the church!

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: With all that we have and all we are, we reach out to you, our God of generosity. We ask that you receive these ordinary gifts; may they be used to offer extraordinary blessings in our community and world. May these gifts remind us that through you, all is possible! Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 892 "Who Comes From God"

Who comes from God, as Word and Breath?
Holy Wisdom.
Who holds the keys of life and death?
Mighty Wisdom.
Crafter and Creator too,
Eldest, she makes all things new;
Wisdom guides what God will do,
Wisest One, Radiant One, welcome, Holy Wisdom.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 288 "Great is Thy Faithfulness"

Great is thy faithfulness, God our Creator;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided -
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!*

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. R

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow -
wondrous the portion thy blessings provide. R **

Benediction:

Eric: As you go from this place, may God's love hold you, now and forever more.

Closing Hymn: MV 145 "Draw the Circle Wide" (2X)

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide...

Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen. (2X)

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

Cancer:

**Carol
Cheryl
Susan
Barb
Margie
Jerry**

**Larry
Ken
Natalie**

**Evelyn
Wes Chalmers' Family
Amy Lou Wolfe's Family
Elaine**

**Gary
Janet
David
Alice**