

Reteaching/Study Guide from Lakeside's Online Worship  
Sunday, January 24, 2021, Sermon by Dr. Greg Corbin, Senior Pastor  
"Jacob: God's Faithfulness" – Genesis 28:10-22

<sup>12</sup>And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God's angels were going up and down on it. <sup>13</sup>The Lord was standing there beside him, saying, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup>Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup>**Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.**"

*Genesis 28:12-15 Christian Standard Bible (CSB) emphasis added*

Among the four patriarchs of Genesis, Jacob's life stands out as the most colorful. Unlike his father, Isaac, he traveled far from his home, and the miles that he covered reflect his personal and at times tortuous spiritual journey toward trust in God and devotion to Him. Every step of the way, Jacob found God to be faithful. **In the big picture of Jacob's life**, he was pivotal among the patriarchs. God would change his name to Israel (the name by which God's Old Testament people would be known), and he would be the father of the twelve sons who would be the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. **The personal picture of Jacob's life**, however, was considerably more complicated and tenuous than the big picture might indicate. Some of Jacob's difficulties were the result of his context; others were purely self-inflicted. Throughout his life, he reaped the results of the problems he created. In short, Jacob was used by God, but in many ways, he was far from a model person and he lived through difficult times. **His family had issues**, beginning with tensions between him and his brother Esau. The favoritism of his father and mother contributed to those tensions. Later in life, Jacob's favoritism among his own sons would create a new generation of hurt within his family. Jacob had some sinful tendencies that continued to plague him. The meaning of his name points to the main problem. "Jacob" is connected or sounds like the Hebrew words for "one who grasps" and for "deceiver" or "trickster." Throughout his life, Jacob could be ambitious. He could quite readily take advantage of a situation for his own benefit, even if the person he took advantage of was his own brother or his father. Esau experienced this firsthand, and in Genesis 27:36, remarked "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Jacob's deceit and that of his mother, forced him to flee his home and brought heartbreak to him and to his family.

But more was in store for Jacob. As he traveled the roughly five hundred miles from his home in Canaan to hide out with his uncle in Paddan-aram, **God revealed Himself to Jacob** at a place called Bethel, literally translated as "house of God" (Genesis 28). With an uncertain future and with little more than a rock to rest his head upon, God brought hope to Jacob through His promise, by His presence, and by His faithfulness. Jacob responded to God with commitment to trust Him and serve Him. The God of his father became his God. Jacob would return to Bethel later in his life to build an altar to God, and God would renew His covenant with Jacob there (Genesis 35). Regarding this, Jacob commented "We must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone" (Genesis 35:3). Framed by his two times at Bethel, another critical incident took place between Jacob and God. Genesis 32:24-32 records that Jacob "wrestled with God" and God changed his name from Jacob ("deceiver") to Israel ("struggled"). His changed name reflected the change in his character and commitment that only God could bring about. Throughout his journeys and struggles, Jacob found God to be absolutely faithful and constantly present. **The eternal witness of Jacob's life** is a reminder that God keeps His promises, that He finds us

in our sin and brokenness, that He uses even the difficult seasons of our lives to shape our character into His likeness and to reveal His grace, and that He uses us for His purpose in spite of our failings. **God will do the same for you and me.**

**To reflect further about God's faithfulness and His presence with us, read Psalms 46 & 139.**

**Questions/Actions for Reflection/Discussion/Application**

- Where is your "Bethel," i.e. places where God has met you?
- Through what difficult circumstances, journeys, and seasons has God sustained you?
- How has God answered you in your day of distress and been with you everywhere you have gone?
- How have you found God to be faithful?
- How has God changed you?

You're in My Prayers,  
Stacey