

Genesis 28:10-17

“**Look** before you **leap**” is pretty good advice, and it can save us from experiencing all kinds of trouble. I’m sure you can think of occasions when you were involved with things you hadn’t fully **investigated**, or didn’t fully **understand**. But sometimes in our **self-reliance**, we decide to give it a try just the same - to **leap** before we **look**. The child who always wants to “do it **himself**” frequently ends up with a **mess** on his hands. When we forge ahead in uncertain situations, **sometimes** they work out just **fine**, but all too often they bring us great **pain** and **sorrow**. Most of those problems could be **avoided** if we would only **wake up**, and realize that we **can’t** do everything by ourselves - if we would just **seek advice** from a friend who has more **experience** - or perhaps if we would take it to the **LORD** in **prayer**. The patriarch **Jacob** was no **stranger** to being **self-reliant**, or **leaping** before he **looked**, and it took a special **vision** from **God Himself**, to wake him up, and to clarify his understanding.

Today we’re going to investigate our text using the theme: **Open Your Eyes, And See The Vision**. God has clearly shown his gracious **love** for us by providing for **all** our needs. And that gracious **love** calls for a clear **response** from us.

Thanks to our Sunday Schools and Lutheran Elementary Schools, the account of Jacob’s journey to Haran, and his vision of a ladder or stairway reaching to heaven, is one of the more **familiar** stories from the Old Testament. Consider the circumstances which **led up** to the events of our text. Jacob had incurred the **wrath** of his brother, Esau, by tricking him out of his **birthright**. Esau was **angry** - angry enough to even **kill** Jacob when the time was right. So, in order to save the family from the **evils** which could result from this feud, **Rebekah** suggested that Jacob would go to Haran and find a **wife**. Isaac **agreed**, especially because he had **not** been pleased with the two **Hittite** women whom **Esau** had married. Jacob lost no time in **leaving**, and no doubt he traveled **alone**, in order to be able to move more **quickly**.

There were certainly a number of unanswered **questions** which were **plaguing** Jacob at this time. For example, would he ever see his **parents** again, especially his ailing father? Would **Esau** hunt him down and **kill** him after his father’s impending death? And would he **ever** be able to **return** to his homeland again? Certainly, Jacob understood that **he himself** was **responsible** for all these questions. He had relied on his **own** reason, and that **reason** had let him **down**, and had led him into **sin**. **Jacob himself** was the one who had plotted to **steal** his

brother's birthright. He **himself** had stood before his father and **lied**, claiming to be Esau. Jacob **knew** that what he had been doing was **wrong**, and now he was suffering the **consequences** of his sin.

But, I think it's important for us to **note** here that in spite of all these **questions**, there was **one** thing which was **not** doubtful for Jacob. He knew where he stood with his **father**, Isaac. Before Jacob left for Haran, he once again received his father's **blessing** - the **same** blessing which he had **stolen** from his brother, Esau. Even though **Esau** had been Isaac's **favorite**, Isaac **knew** that **Jacob** was really supposed to be the bearer of the **Promise**. Isaac wasn't angry about the way Jacob had **deceived** him, nor did he carry a **grudge**. Instead, he made it clear to Jacob that **God almighty** would continue to be **with** him, and to **bless** him richly - with a special **land**, with a multitude of **people**, and with the promise of the **Savior**.

And that brings us to our text for today. The text begins, "*Jacob set out from Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. He came to a certain place and decided to spend the night there, because **the sun had set**. He took one of the stones from that place, put it under his head, and lay down to **sleep** in that place.*" At the time of our text, it's clear that Jacob had already been traveling for several days, because the journey from Beersheba to Luz covered about 70 miles. This wasn't a place where Jacob had **planned** to stop. We're simply told that he had run out of **daylight**, and it was time to **rest**. However, in a very short time, Jacob would come to realize what a **special** place this really was.

Our text continues, "*He had a **dream** in which he saw a **stairway** set up on the earth with its top reaching to **heaven**. There were **angels** of God **ascending** and **descending** on it. There at the top stood the Lord, who said, 'I am the **Lord**, the God of your father **Abraham** and the God of **Isaac**.'*" The things which Jacob saw in this dream were totally unexpected. Three times Moses uses a word which calls attention to this fact. We could paraphrase the words of Moses by saying, "Jacob was dreaming and - oh, a **stairway!** - and **angels!** - and look, there's the **LORD Himself!**"

What a spectacular **sight!** God had **Opened His Eyes, To See A Vision**. He had come to Jacob in the same way He had come to Abraham and Isaac in the past. What a **stairway!** God was showing Jacob that He is **connected** with this world. God's angels **ascend** to heaven, bringing Jacob's needs and requests to God - and then they also **descend** to the earth, bringing Jacob the help and assurance from God which he so desperately needed. And what a **message!** God Himself said,

*“The **land** on which you are lying, I give to **you** and to your **descendants**. Your **descendants** will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed **all the families of the earth** will be blessed. Now, I am **with** you and will **watch over** you wherever you go, and I will **bring you back** again into this land. Indeed, I will **not leave** you until I have done what I have **promised** to you.”* All the things which Jacob **wanted** in life - all of the things which he had **stolen** from his brother - the **land**, the **descendants**, and the **Savior** - **all** of them were now being promised to him by the LORD **Himself** - along with the guarantee of the LORD’s **protection** to boot!

No wonder Jacob was struck with **awe**. It should be **obvious** that Jacob didn’t **deserve** all of this. He didn’t deserve **any** of this. Jacob was a plotting, scheming, lying **sinner**. He **deserved** to be punished with **death** for his greed and selfishness. But God **loved** him - God wanted him to **live** - and God **reassured** him. Jacob would suffer the **physical** consequence of being separated from his **family** for a while, but the LORD would **spare** him from the **spiritual** consequence of being separated from **God** forever.

We don’t stack up any **better** than Jacob did. We also need to **Open Our Eyes, And See The Vision**. Of course, God doesn’t come to us in dreams, showing us a stairway to heaven. But He **does** come to us. God **daily** provides **everything** we need for our bodily welfare. If you **doubt** that, because COVID has severely affected our **economy** and it isn’t what it was back in the 90's, then just look at a few of the simple “basics” in our lives. Even King Solomon with all his wealth never tasted frozen orange juice, or used a cellphone, or drove a chariot that would compare to the ones parked in our church parking lot today. No matter how **little** we might **think** we have, we have far **more** than most people in our world today can even **imagine**. God has been **very** good to us, and all we need to do is **open our eyes** in order to **see** His blessings to us.

And those are just the **physical** blessings. **Spiritually** we have been blessed even **more** greatly. Imagine how greatly the prophets of old, and even the angels in heaven would have rejoiced, to know the things even our youngest **children** know about our **Savior** - the details of His **birth** - the miracles performed during His public **ministry** - and especially the events involving His **suffering, death, and resurrection**. We are so **blessed** to be able to read God’s Word **daily** in our homes - to have our **children** taught that Word **daily** in our Lutheran Schools - to study that Word and worship God **weekly** in a beautiful building like this one - and to receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper **regularly** for the forgiveness of our

sins. **Open Your Eyes**, and **See The Blessings** which the LORD has so generously showered on us.

When Jacob woke up from his dream, he **immediately** responded. In the verses which **follow** our text we're told, "*Jacob got up early in the morning. He took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a sacred **memorial stone** and poured **oil** on top of it. He named that place **Bethel**. (Before this, the name of the city had been Luz.) Jacob **took a vow**, 'If God will be with me to keep me safe on this journey I am making, and **if** he gives me food to eat and clothing to put on, and I come back to my father's house in safety, the Lord will be **my God**, and this stone that I have set up as a memorial stone will be **God's house**, and I will certainly give you **a tenth** of everything that you give me.'*" What does that **mean**? It means that Jacob built a house of **God** - a place to **worship** the LORD - today we would call it a **church**. It was obvious to Jacob that God deserved to be **worshiped** by him, because God **had** done, and would **continue** to do, so **much** for him.

And then we're told that Jacob also made a **vow** - a **promise**. His statement contained an **if** clause, and a **then** clause. In fact, it almost sounds as if Jacob was making a **bargain** with God - **if** You do this for **me**, then **I** will do that for **You**. But the **context** of his vow makes that **impossible**. Jacob was absolutely **sure** that the LORD **would** do all those things for him. The vision which he had just seen had vividly **verified** it for him. Therefore, it would be better to translate his statement **this** way: "**Since** God will be with me ... then I will do these things." Jacob made his vow in **response** to God's grace. **Because** God watched over him, and provided for him, and protected him - Jacob **worshiped** the LORD, built a **church** for Him, and gave Him a **tenth** of all his possessions.

How will **we** respond to God's grace in **our** lives? Well, that's entirely up to **you**. But like **Jacob**, we should be sure to **begin** our response with **worship**. In **worship** our God gives **His best** to us, and we also give **our best** to **Him**. Our **worship** demonstrates how much God is **worth** to us. So, when He receives the **highest priority** in our lives - when God comes **first** in our lives - then all the **other** things; things like our time, talents, and treasure - all **these** things will naturally **follow**. Jacob didn't build a **church** for the LORD or return a **tenth** of all his possessions to the LORD because he **had** to - he did it because he **wanted** to. Jacob recognized it as his **privilege**, and it brought him great **joy**. May we also willingly **follow** his example. Amen.