

This word of Holy Scripture emphasizes a DREAM. Whenever we discuss DREAMS we need to think of Carl Jung who described the images of DREAMS as SYMBOLS, Archetypes for all like images.

Our DREAMS are what inspire and motivate us. Not a Nightmare or doubts.

Our DREAMS are what take us out of our parent's home, take us from where we had always been to reveal a future. Often times those dreams shift over a lifetime, we thought we knew where we were going, we were in control. Possibly our earlier dreams have been realized leading to a new revelation, alternatively that we encounter relationships or a road never before taken which leads to a new and different dream. What have been your dreams?

As we have followed through Genesis, God led Abraham with the dream of possessing a GREAT NAME, a GREAT LAND, and as many generations as STARS in HEAVEN.

ABRAHAM and SARAH's child ISAAC prayed to God and although he and REBEKAH had for decades been unable to conceive, he received the dream of as many generations as GRAINS of SAND in the desert, starting off with twins ESAU and JACOB.

Though, he was the lesser, JACOB's dream had been that instead of his brother, he would possess everything of their Father's. A problem with dreams is that sometimes they are more than/different from we anticipated, and that fulfilling our dreams may come at a terrible price.

JACOB had stolen the birthright from his brother ESAU. JACOB had stolen the blessing from their father. Rebekah sensing Esau's patience was at the limit, told Jacob to take everything he had and leave home. JACOB journeyed toward the one place he knew Isaac and Esau would never go, reversing the journey taken by Abraham and Sarah, to the ancestral home and family of REBEKAH.

Exhausted from running away with all he possesses, JACOB lays down to sleep, using a rock for a pillow. Yet as he rests in sabbath, he dreams.

No longer the Dream of besting Esau and winning every blessing of their Father, JACOB's new DREAM is revealed as a ladder / a stairway to Heaven, reminiscent of the TOWER OF BABEL.

Recall that story was of a people who instead of following where GOD was LEADING chose to follow their own DREAM of SETTLING, giving up DREAMS LED BY GOD, instead to make a GREAT NAME FOR THEMSELVES by being able to ascend to Heaven without need for GOD.

We need to clarify some misconceptions...

- While a question of Settling for what he possesses or trusting GOD/ yet DIFFERENT from those "BABEL-onians", Jacob was not creating this ladder, it was revealed to him, with GOD waiting.
- It is not in the character of Jacob to respond like the Prophet Isaiah "Whoa is me! For I am a man of unclean lips who dwells among a people of unclean lips... LORD, Here am I send me!"
- Also, while the Camp song describes "We are climbing Jacob's Ladder, We are climbing Jacob's Ladder..." JACOB never set hand or foot on even the lowest rung!

JACOB'S LADDER represents a THIN PLACE, one of the points on Earth where Heaven and Earth almost touch, where ANGELS/ Messengers of GOD are constantly climbing down and up.

The naming of THIN PLACES comes from the cultures of IRELAND. Where the Mountains and Moors, Cliffs, Woods and Glades, feel ethereal, mystic, other-worldly. There are THIN PLACES all around the world, SACRED places where you feel GOD very present. Possibly for you these are the Grand Canyon, the Glaciers, El Capitan in Yosemite, a Mountain-top ascended or sitting beside a favorite Lake, walking along the Shore listening to the rhythmic sounds of the Ocean.

WHAT JACOB DOES DO is to recognize this Thin Place, this place of DREAMS is a HOLY PLACE!, and consecrates the rock that was his pillow as an altar. The place he calls BETHEL, in Hebrew “Beth” refers to House and “El” is the generic word for God, so literally Jacob names this as THE HOUSE OF GOD.

Lest we miss the point of the story, it is not about Jacob’s Ladder! JACOB is receiving revelation of a new DREAM. GOD gave Abraham the Dream of as many generations as Stars in the Heavens; Isaac the dream of as many generations as SANDS in the Desert; GOD’s revelation to JACOB, is The DREAM of as many children & generations as the fertile dust of the Earth. Subtly different from the STARS & SANDS, while this is a REMINDER of ADAM & EVE that you are DUST OF THE EARTH, you are also FILLED with FERTILITY, rich in possibilities.

However, our old buddy JACOB has never gotten anything by waiting for it!

Everything Jacob possesses, Jacob received by struggling to get the better of his brother, or getting the upper hand over his father; so this DREAM will be: Whether Jacob can receive this and future blessings as a GIFT of GRACE, or whether Jacob will try to get the better of each of the strangers he will meet, and the Vow he makes is whether he will get the better of GOD!

This happens for many of us. We are GIFTED with the Brass Ring, we find our ideal JOB and immediately try to use it to get something else. We look starry-eyed at that other person on our WEDDING DAY and before the Reception is over, we are imagining how we are going to change them. We buy the perfect HOME, with a list of renovations we want to make in order to update or make better. What we are really trying to do, is to make that “other,” even our LIVES under our control.

The Book of Genesis has a subtlety, that this DREAM represents JACOB’s First Encounter with GOD. Jacob names the relationship, with A VOW of returning to this place, to this relationship again in the future. That is a reality of Christian Faith.

We may have a date and time when we first accepted Jesus Christ as our LORD & SAVIOUR.

There may have been a dark night of our soul, where we came to ACCEPT GOD INTO OUR LIVES.

I have also come to discover something about the CHURCH today, the thing that more of us have in common than anything else is not being retired Engineers or Farmers, whether we came from Minnesota or Michigan, whether we went to Church Camp or went to College, it is “HOW MANY of us have a Parent or Grandparent, a trusted Family member who was a MINISTER?!” Whether Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Unitarian, Assembly of GOD, Lutheran, Presbyterian or Non-Denom, a majority of us were nurtured in the community of faith, and have had experience after experience nurturing and confirming what we believe, who we are in relationship to GOD/Jesus/the Holy Spirit. One of the many things re-affirmed this week in Vacation Bible School, was that we are NEVER TOO OLD! Continuing that theme, TODAY’s theme is YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD to experience GOD anew.

I believe there are also THIN PLACES in our LIVES, not equated with places on a map, but relationships, experiences, memories... holy moments, when you feel close to GOD, and close to the invisible Communion of Saints who surround us. Perhaps it was your BAPTISM, singing in a CHOIR, your CONFIRMATION, your WEDDING, the BIRTH & BAPTISM OF YOUR CHILD, Possibly joining this church for these 14 possibly TODAY!