

Genesis 28:10-19

God Interrupts Us

Nunawading and Waverley, 19-7-20

Our heavenly Father has this habit of interrupting us. I thought I would study forestry and that would be my career but the Holy Spirit interrupted me and directed me towards the ministry. God interrupted Jacob and granted him a new destiny filled with grace and blessing. Greg Sheridan, a journalist working for "The Australian" and a terrific Christian person was asked to write about five books that influenced him. G.K. Chesterton and George Orwell changed his life and propelled him to become a journalist. A settled future in Australia was beckoning but, on a flight, overseas he picked up at the airport "The Year of Living Dangerously" by Chris Koch and Sheridan felt this urgent need to live in Indonesia, the place the book dealt with.

We are dealing here with the direction of your life. For Christians, for those of us seized by God, who can see infinity, there can be no drifting, aimless, meandering life. There can be confusion about what to do, moments of doubt when you question if you have made the right choices, but never a thoughtless, directionless existence. The great news Jacob's life reveals to us is that you can see yourself hurtling down a bad pathway and then be interrupted by the Lord. The first act of a joy ride is someone else's car sends a teenager down the road that leads to arrests and stints in jail. Most of us know when we have taken a step too far, in anger we tell a child to move out or do something shady for our employer. It sets the way forward, or should I say downward? All is not lost, however. Out of his great mercy, our Father interrupts and provides us with a new direction, a vision of glory and of redemption that leads us to give their lives to serve him and set out on a completely different pathway.

This is the story of Jacob, as I said. He was a deceiver, a liar and a thief. Despite being brought up in a pious family, he used God for his own advantage. Jacob forever coveted what his twin brother Esau had in being the the major inheritor of the family property and the right to bear the promise of the covenant. We recall how Jacob got hold of the birth right for a pot of red stew and then impersonated his older brother and stole the blessing from his blind father Isaac. The episode we read about today occurred when he was fleeing to his uncle Laban in Haran, fearful of being killed by Esau. His desires took him too far and now he was rushing forward into a life of selfish, narcissistic behaviour. The course was set; or was it?

There was a time, an experience and a place that changed everything for Jacob. At night, near the town of Luz, where he lay his head on **a stone pillow**, the Lord revealed himself in a vision. **A ladder** was placed near Jacob's head and at the top of the ladder was **a gate** to the holy temple of God in heaven. **Angels were going up** from Jacob and **then coming down to him**. At this moment, Jacob became aware that he had been forcing his way on God, fighting him and grabbing what had not been given to him. Spiritual violence should not have been coming out of him but angels ascending to God but he hadn't chosen that path. Surely the gate should have been firmly shut against him but instead, heaven was meeting the earth and opening to it. Jacob thought life was about him and, consequently, got everything wrong. He thought the promise of the covenant was his selfish possession rather than God's gift for the world coming through him. But all that changed at Bethel.

For us New Testament people, the gate of heaven has opened in Jesus Christ who said: **Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man**. Jesus has chosen each one of us and blessed us with his free acceptance and cleansed us of our egocentric thinking. The place where he meets with you, our **Bethel**, which means the house of God, is when we come together in his name, hear his word and participate in his body and blood.

Every Sunday is a mini interruption in the flow of life when God puts a ladder from heaven next to our heads on earth. Occasionally, we need a much bigger interruption. A father off north west Tasmania had his ten-year-old son snatched from his boat by a shark. A young man in Western Australia bogged his parent's four-wheel drive in desolate area and spent two days walking to safety, despite losing 8 litres of body fluid. In an interruption like that you very quickly assess the importance of family and the gift of life. It is a great shame that many miss the deeper humility of demoting self and relying on the Saviour. There is a goal that we are living for; our redemption and the redemption of humanity. This is a huge challenge for us; it requires us to accommodate God's interruptions and joyfully accept his destiny that governs the direction we take.