

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Jacob's Dream

Are you hopeful about the future?

Scripture: Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23; 28:10-17

Rev. Steve Filyk

September 24, 2021

Opening Hymn: 10,000 Reasons

Chorus: Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone), How Great is Our God

Closing Hymn: Be thou my vision

Are you hopeful for the future?

The Doomsday clock,

a symbol representing the likelihood of a global

Man-made catastrophic event

Was reset earlier this year.

On the basis of our collective vulnerability to nuclear catastrophe,

Environmental disaster, and disruptive technologies

We are currently 100 seconds to midnight!<sup>i</sup>

[Maybe even closer if you consider the pandemic!]

Are you hopeful for the future?

Are you hopeful for your family?

Are you hopeful for our nation?

Are you hopeful for the church?

In recent years there has been a lot of research on hope.

According to the theory of American Psychologist Charles Snyder,

Hope is a 'life-sustaining human strength'

That flows being able to set goals, develop strategies,

And maintain motivation in reaching them.<sup>ii</sup>

Seen in this way hope starts and ends with us.

It depends on our vision, our planning, our determination.

But what happen when we lose confidence in our own agency?

What happens we are short on those resources

That help us choose goals and reach them?

What happens to hope when we are aged, or ill,

Or without a network to surround us and lift us up?

PAUSE

In today's Bible passage we meet a young man named Jacob.

Jacob is a twin.

The younger twin.

He followed his brother into the wide world.

In his Middle Eastern culture

Birth order was important.

The firstborn had a larger inheritance,  
And greater status within the family.

But Jacob, the younger brother, was ambitious.

And there wasn't much he wouldn't do  
To get ahead.

In an earlier part of his story

(a part we didn't read today)

He takes advantage of his brother's hunger  
To gain more of their father's estate.

In today's story he conspires with his mother

To swindle the same brother out of the blessing  
reserved for the firstborn.

Jacob is ambitious.

He has goals and plans to reach them.  
But his masquerading as Esau  
take things a step too far.

You can only poke a bear so many times

Before you rouse it to anger.  
With this last play...  
Esau is looking for revenge.

Jacob has only a matter of moments, it seems,

To pack his bags and flee the surroundings.  
His mom sends him to his relatives  
Far away (400 miles away).

Jacob is ambitious.

Jacob is hopeful.  
But now his life is upended.  
Now he is a fugitive on the run.

He has no passport.

He has little money.  
He is travelling on his own,

With only an address for an uncle

He has likely never met before.

We can only imagine Jacob's fear and worry

As he curls up in a ditch off the highway.

He is scared and alone

Holding his robe tight, using a rock for a pillow,

trying to get some shut-eye  
While remaining vigilant for hungry animals...

Life has quickly changed for Jacob.  
And life can quickly pivot for any one of us.

The market crashes and our savings evaporate.  
A routine check-up reveals a malignant cancer.  
We receive a text about a terrible accident.

Life can quickly pivot for any one of us.  
We can find ourselves curled up like Jacob.  
just trying to make it through the nite.

But what happens to Jacob in that wilderness?  
Jacob has a dream.

Jacob sees some sort of ladder connecting earth and heaven;  
Messengers are moving both ways.

Jacob sees the Lord.  
And the Lord speaks to HIM.

The Lord offers him, the younger brother,  
the same blessings  
That God gave to Jacob's grandfather.

But more than that,  
The Lord offers to be with him,  
To watch over him and keep him  
Till all that has been promised is accomplished.

What a dream.  
What a vision.

God shows Jacob that  
Heaven and earth are connected.

God tells Jacob that he is blessed  
And that God will be watching over him.

What a dream.  
What a vision.

What a reason for hope.

Not a hope that starts and ends with us,  
that depends on our vision,  
our planning, our determination.  
But a hope that is based on God.

This doesn't mean Jacob won't have a hard road before him.

If you read the story you'll realise  
That life continues to test him.

But somehow life is now incredibly different.  
Jacob knows that GOD has secured a good future for him.  
He knows that God is with him.

So what does this dream have to do with us?  
It has a lot to do with us.

We are the spiritual descendent of Abraham and Jacob.  
Through Christ we are also blessed  
(and intended to be a blessing).

We are also given the same amazing promise  
of presence and protection

Jesus tells us at the end of the Gospel of Matthew:  
"I am with you always, to the very end of the age."<sup>iii</sup>

I hope this gives you hope.  
Hope for your family.  
Hope for our nation.  
Hope for the church.

I hope this gives you hope  
To take your child/grandchild to college  
And trust them to be an adult.

I hope this gives you hope  
To reach out to new neighbors  
Who live a different lifestyle.

I hope this gives you hope  
That even half-full churches  
Can be incubators of God's kingdom.

Nurture this hope.  
It is a 'life-sustaining strength'.

"In 1945, within months of his liberation from a concentration camp in Nazi Germany,  
[Psychologist] Viktor Frankl sat down to write a book...  
He wrote the manuscript in nine successive days...

The book, titled Man's Search for Meaning,  
went on to sell over 10 million copies in 24 languages."

Frankl noted "The prisoner who had lost faith in the future – his future – was doomed.  
With his loss of belief in the future he also lost his spiritual hold;  
he let himself decline  
and become subject to mental and physical decay."<sup>iv</sup>

God offers us hope but we need to embrace it.

Let's hold onto it.

Let's lean into it today.

And let us live with joyful expectation

Of the promises, the dreams, God has given.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> "Current Time - 2021 - Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists." Bull. At. Sci., 4 June 2021, [thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time](https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time).

<sup>ii</sup> See "What is Hope in Psychology + 7 Exercises & Worksheets." PositivePsychology, 4 July 2021, [positivepsychology.com/hope-therapy](https://positivepsychology.com/hope-therapy).

<sup>iii</sup> Matthew 28:20 NIV

<sup>iv</sup> Muldoon, Tim. "Facing our hardships with hope: lessons from Viktor Frankl." Medium, 29 Mar. 2020, [muldoont.medium.com/facing-our-hardships-with-hope-lessons-from-viktor-frankl-7a44b7bb4990](https://muldoont.medium.com/facing-our-hardships-with-hope-lessons-from-viktor-frankl-7a44b7bb4990).