

Sermon 20 July 2014 Genesis 28:1-19a, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
'Searched, Known, Named'

Prayer: God of dreams and visions, we enter into moments of stillness and feel your presence. Through relationships – our relationship with you and with others – we know that you are constantly with us. We thank you for your many gifts to us, but especially for the gifts of being named, known, and held by you. Amen.

Searched, known, named – even when asleep with a stone for a pillow, that's some statement! When Jacob was asleep – about 80 km (50 miles*) from his starting point God goes looking for him. A quick background sketch is that Isaac (and Rebekah) like Abraham want a wife for Jacob from their 'own' kind / tribe / YHWH believers. Jacob has been sent – with his blind fathers blessings and all of his roguish personality plus's and minus's!

Remember – from last week how when his older twin Esau was hungry and Jacob had a warm nice smelling stew cooking, Jacob said Esau could have it if he gave Jacob his inheritance rights? Remember how when it came time for Isaac to give the father's blessing, Jacob (with his mother's help) made his forearms 'hairy' – like Esau's and took Esau's oldest son blessing? **Despite** today's wonderful story of God and Jacob – there are more 'tales' (+ and -) to come! Jacob is all too human and a wonderful reminder for us that although the grace of God's presence is on / in our lives, we are still work in progress. cV

Today, about 80 km on his 650km journey Jacob needs to rest and falls asleep – and dreams. He sees heaven open and the angels coming back and forth earth to heaven, heaven to earth on some sort of structure – a 'ladder' / staircase / ramp... but do you know what? The text doesn't say God used it! God is experienced as being beside – God just shows up in what Jacob comes to see as a sacred place. That's what sacred places are – right? Places, moments where we experience the divine? Cv

We are comfortable knowing God is with us – and with our family elsewhere whether in Auckland or across the world. **We** know that where ever we travel – go away from this 'home' God will be with us. In **Jacobs'** time YHWH-God was still teaching this. One of the biggest learning's of the times in exile for God's people was to discover God was still with them. The **power** of the story of Daniel in Babylon – God, YHWH was with him and his 3 friends – and they were not on 'home ground'. Jacob experiencing his own epiphany, revelation, touch of the Lord... was not on his tribal lands, and yet God was present. Cv

Another generational difference between Jacob / Daniel and us is that we tend to dismiss dreams but they are one of God's favourite means of communication! In Jacob's dream, the text shows us that this is what evangelists might claim as 'Jacob conversion'. Until this point YHWH has belonged to his grandfather Abraham, his father Isaac but now – now YHWH find him- Jacob (soon to be re-named Israel). Their God is his; the promises made to them are renewed for him and his, he belongs.

For those of us who like numbers: Sibley Towner does count this as "the eighth reiteration of the divine promise of the land to a patriarch and the seventh direct or indirect repetition of the promise of numerous progeny," and God "also makes the fifth and final statement of the overarching theme of blessing to the nations"; *Genesis, Westminster Bible Companion*)." Jacob is firmly put into his place in the family's story of YHWH-God and His plan for the earth and all its peoples. God is working his purpose out – with us – rogues, saints, real people at work and it would seem in sleep! cV

Jacob is scared – travelling away from all the comforts of home and family and friends to find a wife from tribal-family he has never seen – **and** rogue that he is, is found, recognised, and promised hope for the future by the living God. There is hope for us! In the middle of being ourselves – and not being perfect, or perpetual winners, or parental expectation achievers – in the middle of living God is there

*Sidney Greidanus (*The Lectionary Commentary: The Old Testament and Acts*) page 1

** SacraconversaZione p3

beside us, reminding us of our place in the divine plan, showing us we belong in the faith-tribal family, and we too have a calling to fulfil. God will look for us and finding us – names and claims us.

What Jesus reminds us of in today's parable is what is not included in our calling. What is not included is our taking *off God* what is Gods; what is not included is our taking *over from* God what is Gods; what is not included is our rushing in to solve the world's problems with evil by self-attempts to remove, by self-attempts to eradicate all that is not in our sight fulfilling God's call, so doing **exactly** what the servants in Jesus parable want to do **and the boss – says "No"**.

The boss says judgement is mine, in my time I will gather all up and sort out the good, I will purify – burn away the mistakes, errors, waste so that the best is left in my hands. **It will shine** – the image of gold shining in the sunlight begins to express how the children of God will be – in that time.

For those of us who like numbers we are doomed to disappointment with this "time". It is Kairos time – God's time / God's moment, not chronos time which is for us clock / calendar time. We can't measure Kairos time; all we can do is accept the truth that it will happen – *sometime!* So how do we fill our days? Sitting down and marking them off on a calendar? Or getting on with life – trusting that God can and will do his 'stuff'? Our choice. Cv

The parable is about us getting on and doing our 'stuff' as wheat, children of God – side by side with the 'weeds' –hostile human beings. Ray Lewis and I were talking this week about parables and I shared that I had read that believing you could understand a parable exactly, was believing you could hold a cup of water in your hand! In the end your hand is wet, and we do get some parabolic understandings but...

But Jesus loved teaching in parables and today he is the sower – of good wheat which all produces a harvest. Unqualified success – Jesus sown wheat, the children of God produce a harvest. If you hear nothing else today – hear this – **as children of God, you are good** and producing results for your sower / creator / boss - Jesus.

You are doing it exactly where you are supposed to be – in the middle of your living Jesus is waiting until the right time to gather you in, wrap you up and tuck you safely away. Different words but same meaning as the promise to Jacob **'15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'**

Jesus parable says – until God's moment comes and the promise made so many thousands of years ago is fulfilled we are to continue to fulfil our calling to bear fruit – to be good – life giving wheat and feed the world's hunger not only it's physical needs but also its spiritual and emotional needs. Matthew in his Gospel keeps reminding us of Jesus core message which is to: *** “:apply a simple test to yourselves and others and leave the rest to God. {And} That simple test has already been identified: {Jesus said} you will know them by their actions, their "fruits," their "righteous" "shining," which always means in Jesus' message bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, hope for the hopeless, justice for the disenfranchised.”* To be the Good News – The Gospel to all people. cV

Have you remembered the way ripe wheat looks? The weight of the 'fruit' causes the 'head' to bow. I believe it helps us to acknowledge bearing fruit for Jesus weighs us down – a bit! It is a weight to be different to the world around us, to be always mindful we have a choice, there is an alternative to what the hostile world is saying, doing, even when it looks bright and cheerful and it feel like it is getting all the resources, gains, payoff, and in the face of all this and more – it seems naive or simplistic to speak of good finally being recognised over evil. **But that's the story of Jacob, and it's our story.** *Until* God's moment arrives, we are called to bear good fruit trusting the Sower – Jesus knows his 'stuff' and when the moment arrives, trusting that God knows his as well! He ought to – he's searched us, knows us and has named us as his children, belonging to him. Amen.