

February 22, 2021

Read Genesis 28

Key verse: Genesis 28:16

*Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,
'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!'*

God's Unnoticed Presence

Jacob seems an unusual pick for God's blessing. Conspiring with his mother Rebekah, he deceives his father Isaac in order to receive the blessing that should have been given to his brawny older brother Esau whose rage forces Jacob to flee from his home and journey to the home of Rebekah's brother Laban. It was on this journey that Jacob has this wonderful dream and hears the reassuring words of God, "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go" (Gen 28:15).

This was Jacob's first encounter with God, and it seems to have occurred by accident – in a dream when he was alone, far from home, and running for his life. But it kind of makes sense that God appears to Jacob under these circumstances, doesn't it? As long as we feel safe and secure, enjoying an abundance of food and friends and entertainment, God's presence can go unnoticed. What do we need God for if things are running smoothly?

The former Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright observes that people tend to say the Lord's Prayer backwards. What he means by this is that we don't bother to pray to God until we find ourselves in a terrible mess, and then our first petition to God is "Deliver me from evil," and the evil from which we ask deliverance is something we've stepped into by our own volition. And once God *does* deliver us from evil, we then ask him to "lead us not into (that) temptation (again)."

Perhaps our lives would be more settled if we prayed more often, acknowledging God's eternal presence with us, even when we feel content with our lives. Perhaps we would start to recognize that our feeling of contentment has something to do with God's continuous presence and blessings upon us. I pray that the discipline you exercise during Lent would be a discipline you exercise *beyond* Lent, that you would spend each day aware of God's abiding presence and his amazing grace!

Prayer: Dear Lord, how easy it is for us to ignore you when we are content. Forgive us for not noticing you. Help us to recognize your presence in the countless blessings that you shower upon us each and every day. Amen.