

Jesus is inviting us to trust him. To trust that he will keep his promises. To build your life, your values, your identity trusting that Jesus will keep his promises. In Jesus you are set free to live life with God as 'Papa'; that's your loving, adoring Father who affectionately loves you more than you'll ever know.

So we live trusting Jesus promise that he will return and raise all people, at which time there will be a great judgement. There Jesus will declare you to the whole world to be Father's loved child, in whom he delights.

And for those who don't want to know Jesus, for those who want to make a deal, that will be given them; life on their terms, which will be so far short of what God intends. What a sad

way to exist, always having to prove yourself, never know if you're love, only comparing yourself with others trying to be better than they are. No deep seeded knowing Father's love, just being anxious about getting it right, or else!

I find it encouraging to see how God walked with Jacob and grew him to greater maturity in relationship to him. His name is eventually changed from Jacob; which means deceiver, to Israel; which means he wrestles with God. The relationship Israel grows into with God is one that grew over time as God continued to invest himself in Jacob. God enjoys having a wrestle with his children. For it is in the wrestle that we grow to know him for who he is; so that hopefully we end up loving him for who he is, our Dad.

I pray we all grow to greater maturity as we simply trust God for who he is, and not what we might get out of him. I pray we grow loving God for who he is; our loving Father, our flesh and blood Brother, our closest Friend. I pray we grow knowing this God more intimately, experiencing his love and affection, so that all we are and all we do is a living reflection of him. I pray we discover our identity in him, living adventurously, expectantly, confidently growing to be all 'Papa' has dreamed we might be.



Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553

Jesus' disciples multiplying disciples

23 July 2017 JACOB'S LADDER Genesis 28:10-19



Today's Old Testament reading was the story of Jacob's ladder. How would you have felt after such an experience? What a reassurance God gives to Jacob that he will be faithful to his promise; the promise he made to Abraham, Isaac, and which flows on to Jacob as the heir.

What a great promise; the land is gifted to Jacob and his descendants. The whole world will be blessed through Jacob's descendants, and they will be as numerous as the dust of the earth. And Jacob hasn't even had a child yet; he's a fugitive, running for his life. What amazing promises.

If God had made these promises to you what would have been your response? What do you feel would be the appropriate response to such promises?

It's always good to notice that God is giving promises. If I promised to do something for you, where does the responsibility for keeping the promise lie? Can you keep my promises for me?

So I find Jacob's response to these great promises from God rather strange. Here is what he said; "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshipping God and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me." (Gen. 28:20-22)

I find this a strange response because it

sounds like Jacob is putting conditions on God's promise. It doesn't sound like acceptance; 'Wow, God, thanks'. That sounds like acceptance. But Jacob still seems to be wanting to be in control.

If God does what he says, then Jacob will accept him as god. Isn't that big of Jacob; I'm sure God should feel really honoured that Jacob would accept him as his god!

This reminds me of the old phrase: "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine." I'm just not sure that this is the type of faith response God is seeking.

But I must admit at times I've treated God like that. I've sought to make deals; 'God if you do this, then I'll do that'. 'God if you heal me I'll turn up to church every Sunday.'

'God if you give me the money, I'll work for you.' Have you ever made deals with God?

This story reminds me of how hard it is for God to achieve his goal; faith. Faith being simple trust; loving God for who he is, not for what you might get. Jacob still seems very much in the 'what I might get' stage of life; 'God if you come through then you can be my god.' Where's the faith in that? Where's the trust in that?

It strikes me that the sort of faith God is seeking isn't created by the spectacular. Jacob has just experienced a spectacular revelation of God. He saw God at the top of the stairs. He saw the angels. But a loving trust wasn't created.

What would it take for people to lovingly trust God with their lives? Trusting that he will be faithful to his promises before they're completed. Simply taking him at his word; because you know the

guy. You know he can be trusted, because that's his character. What would it take for people to lovingly trust God with their lives?

It has taken Jesus his life that we might lovingly trust God with our lives. What an amazing relationship Jesus invites us into through this life, death

What kind of relationship is God seeking to create?

and resurrection. Jesus didn't give us a tenth, he's giving his life, he gives himself totally. You can trust this guy. Trust him with your life because you know his character.

The character of Jesus hasn't changed. He's the same guy who willingly put his life on the line, so that you might have life at the cost of his life. You can trust this guy; trust him with your daily decisions, trust him with your expenses, trust him with your

values, you can trust him with your life.

That's what we read from Romans; "So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously

expectant, greeting God with a childlike 'What's next, Papa?' God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children." (Romans 8:12-17 Message Paraphrase)

What a beautiful relationship of trust Jesus invites us to live with him.

I love knowing I can give up on the old do-it-yourself life, rather I

trust Jesus; trusting what he has done, what he is doing and what he will do. I don't have to manipulate life to work out how I want it, I'm invite to join Jesus, walking and talking with him, discovering life as God intends it.

That thought brings peace to my mind. As I walk and talk with Jesus, together we adventurously and expectantly discover life with 'Papa'. We discover who he has created us to be. We grow to maturity as 'Papa's' kids.

I think it took Jacob a long time to discover this part of his relationship with God. For a long time he was very much a do-it-yourself guy; planning, manipulating, seeking the best deal for himself. It took Jacob a long time to grow to maturity in this relationship that God had invited him into.

I think the ladder reflected his thinking. He was all about

working his way to where he wanted to be. He was climbing the ladder of success.

This reminds me of Jesus' parable of the lost son. It probably should be called the parable of the lost sons, for both sons where a long, long way from living knowing their father's love and

I'm invited to join Jesus, walking and talking with him

affection for them.

The younger son went looking for life in a distant country. The older son totally missed the father's love and affection and slaved away at his job. Neither son was living, knowing the love and affection of the father. Neither son's life was shaped by the love and affection of the father. Neither son's identity was determined by their father's love and affection.

At the end of that parable Jesus leaves us with the older son, outside the party, complaining, with the father inviting him to come inside and join in his celebration of life. The son is invited into knowing his father's love and affection. We're never told what the older son did, because Jesus is

seeking a response from us. Will we take Jesus invitation to know his Father's love and affection for us, so that this relationship shapes everything about us. So that this relationship of love and affection defines who we are. Will we accept Jesus' invitation?

Jesus isn't after a Jacob response; one with conditions added. 'Yes, Jesus, so long as you give me a good life.' 'Yes, Jesus, so long as I don't have to talk to those people.' 'Yes, Jesus, you'll be impressed with how hard I'll work.' Jesus isn't after a Jacob response.