

House of God, Gate of Heaven

Scripture Reading — Genesis 28:10-22

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought . . . “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” — Genesis 28:16-17

In today’s verses, Jacob is on the run, but he is under the watchful eye of God.

As Jacob enters into sleep using a stone for a pillow, he receives a vision. He sees an ongoing connection between heaven and earth, “a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven.” And he sees angels not just ascending into heaven but also descending to the earth, where they serve God among his people (Psalm 91:11). Jacob called the place Bethel, which means “house of God.”

The church of my growing-up years in Fulton, Illinois, was called Bethel. It was situated on a hill near the Mississippi River. Growing up, I did not see that church as being “awesome” or the “gate of heaven,” but now, looking back, I see something that I did not see then.

I see more clearly than ever that my faith was molded within that community. Along with memories of my parents, I remember a youth counselor named Siebert, a pastor named Case, and a friend named Todd who was always there for me.

When we meet Jacob in Gene-sis 28, he is alone. He is not sure when, if ever, he can return home again. And yet God reminds him that he is not -really alone. There is a connection between heaven and earth. Today, we might even call that connection . . . a church.

Prayer

Dear God of heaven and earth, may “your kingdom come . . . on earth as it is in heaven.” May we open our eyes to see how your church can be a witness by connecting people to you. In Jesus, Amen.

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