

## “Up Close and Personal”

### Genesis 28:10-17

**Idea:** God is not distant and aloof with His creation; He is up close and personal.

**Intro:** We have been reminded this morning through our worship that God is good! His salvation is great! His grace is amazing! In salvation God seeks out and saves the lost. He forgives the sinner and welcomes him or her as a son or daughter. This morning we are stepping out of our study in 2 Timothy to celebrate the salvation we have in Jesus Christ by observing the Lord’s Supper.

We find this meal in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). This was a Passover meal the Lord enjoyed with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. During the meal, Jesus broke the bread, blessed the cup, and commanded them to observe it as a remembrance of who He was and what He would do for them (Luke 22:19-20). The elements of the meal symbolized the body and blood, which would be bruised and shed for them on the cross. It memorialized the gracious length to which God would go to redeem sinful people. The cross was the apex of God’s activity among mankind, but it was by no means the inauguration. The Bible reveals that God has always been active and present. He is an up close and personal God.

The God of the Bible is vastly different than the gods found in other religious systems and beliefs. The Bible calls its readers to communion with God. This is not true of those in pantheism who are told to meditate and sit and chant mantras and look inward. In the pantheistic worldview (Hinduism/Sikhism), there is only a capital “I.” The reason is because those in this system don’t really pray. They cannot pray. They have to meditate because they are part of the ultimate reality. There is no “I/You.” There is only one big capital “I,” so they look inward. There is union with the impersonal absolute, which is the goal. This is not so with the Christian faith. There is communion with the Living God, and dare I tell you that the Judeo/Christian faith is the only combination of teaching that calls you to communion with the Living God. In pantheism it is union. In the other major monotheistic system (Islam) you would never ever think of talking about communion with God. It would be a blasphemous statement to them. But in the Bible we discover that God calls you and me to break that bread and drink that cup and to do it in remembrance of Him. Just as the Apostle Paul said to the Colossians, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col 1:27). The Lord’s Supper symbolizes the inward presence of God that came and tabernacled in the world and offers to tabernacle with you. You and I as believers in Jesus are the temple of the Living God. He is an up close and personal God. This is portrayed beautifully in the story of Jacob and his dream.

Read Genesis 28:10-17.

**Inquiry:** Jacob is the grandson of Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish faith. Abraham was a pagan living in Haran when God called him to faith (Gen 12). He left Haran and traveled west, following God’s command and promise. After several years, God gave Abraham a son in Isaac to fulfill the promise that he would be the father of many nations (Gen 21). Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. They would become two nations, Edom and Israel. Jacob is the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. He is the son through whom the promise to Abraham would be lived out, but you would never believe it if you only knew of Jacob’s early years. The name Jacob means “trickster,” and he lived up to his name. Jacob tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright as the firstborn son (Gen 25:29-34). Then he stole his blessing in a plan schemed out by Rebekah his mother (Gen 27). During his younger years, Jacob looked nothing like his faithful grandfather Abraham. Nowhere do we see him praying to God or seeking His face. We don’t see him believing God and trusting in His Word. Instead, we see him conspiring to get ahead and get what he wants. Even in Genesis 28 on this journey to find a wife, Jacob is not seeking God’s help and direction. He is living and going about his life as a secular, worldly man. But we encounter the beauty of the gospel in this story because God is seeking Jacob. He reveals Himself

to this religious pagan. God gets up close and personal with Jacob and extends an invitation for him to be in relationship with God.

What God did for Jacob, He still does for everyone one of us today. The reason Jesus commanded us to observe the Lord's Supper is so that we remember the communion we enjoy with God. I want to share three things that we remember in this meal.

### **1. God sought you when you were not seeking Him.**

(vs. 11-12)

Jacob went to sleep this night just like he had every other night, with no thought of God at all. He didn't spend time on his knees asking God for help and direction. He was not praying for favor in the search for a wife. Knowing his story and what Jacob would become, we expect to find him praying and seeking God. Jacob, however, was not seeking God. It was God who sought out Jacob.

If you are in relationship with God today, it was the Lord who sought you first. You were not seeking God. *"No one seeks for God"* (Rom 3:11). It is God who seeks for you. This is the beauty of the gospel. In the Lord's Supper today, we remember and celebrate that God has sought us out. He *"came to seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10).

### **2. God called you when you were not calling on Him.**

(vs. 13)

Again, before Jacob went to sleep he was not on his knees calling upon God. He was not declaring faith in God. It was the Lord who called to Jacob and reiterated the promise given to Abraham. God called Jacob to himself.

Likewise, it was God who called each of us to Himself. In April of 1997, it was God who called out to me. The only thing I did was pick up the spiritual phone and answer. I was in sin, cut off from God, but He called out to me and invited me into a saving relationship and into communion with the Living God.

### **3. God blessed you when you did not deserve it. (vs. 13-15)**

The amazing grace of God is not only does He seek out and call sinful people to Himself, He also desires to bless them. Let's be honest, salvation in and of itself is enough. If all God did for us was remove our sin and its judgment, that would be more than enough. But He does more than that, He blesses. He is a good Father who desires to bless His children. This blessing is not based upon merit; it is based on progeny. We are the offspring of God. We have been adopted into His family (Gal 4:5).

In Abraham God called out and created a people for Himself that He might bless so they would be a blessing to all people. In Christ God is still calling out and creating a people for Himself that He might bless so they would be a blessing to all people.

**Conclusion:** God is near to you. He is up close and personal. He sees you. He pays attention to you. He loves you. He is not aloof. He is not distant. He is not indifferent or unapproachable. Through the cross God has demonstrated His love and made a way to know Him.

This morning I have some good news, some bad news, and some best news for you.

Good News - You were made by God and for God (Col 1:16). You were designed to perfectly relate and be in relationship with holy God.

Bad News - You are sinful and broken. The sinful nature of Adam in the Garden has been passed down to each of us, and we are all born into the world in rebellion against the God who created us for Himself. Your sin and my sin is under the just wrath of holy God. Sin has produced brokenness in our lives.

Best News - The gospel declares that God the Son has paid the penalty for your sin. Romans 5:8 says, "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" He offered His life as a substitute for you and me and experienced the wrath of God the Father against your sin. So that now, we can experience forgiveness for sin by placing our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are given a choice to make?

The truth about salvation may be seen in Calvary's three propositions: one died *in* sin; one died *to* sin; one died *for* sin.

#### Give an invitation.

We are a covenant body of Christ that takes both our relationship with Jesus and community with one another seriously. We celebrate all that Jesus has done in us, and we celebrate the covenant we share with one another. We don't believe we are here by chance. Instead, by grace, God has brought us together so that we might express the life of Christ before a watching world. If you agree with that say, "Amen."

Fence the table for the Lord's Supper.

Observe the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-20)