

Marshall Reeves – Sunday Sermon

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The I in Me That I Did Not Know

Gen 28:

10 And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put [them for] his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I [am] the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I [am] with thee, and will keep thee in all [places] whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done [that] which I have spoken to thee of. 16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew [it] not.

This is a remarkable event in the life of Jacob that is captured and told to every generation since. It's a story within Jacob's larger story having to do with his search for a mate. It's our story as well as we seek greater meaning in our lives through identifying "the other" that we are innately aware of. We sense its presence in its beckoning call. We know deep within that we're not alone, nor were we ever created to be. Let's exegete these verses together.

We read in vs 10 he went toward Haran, the meaning of which is to glow. Notice the similarity to Moses experience of being drawn to a burning (gleaming, shining) bush. Moses had been taking his father in law's sheep to this pasture for months and even years and never noticed the flaming bush before. Was it because God decided to ignite it on that particular day or had it always glowed but was invisible to Moses because he didn't have eyes to see it. Never doubt that God is continuously leading each of us, uttering rhema into our ears, exhorting us to open our eyes and wake up. He did it for Moses and as we'll see, for Jacob as well. Keep in mind that the OT speaks in types and shadows. Haran, the place of glowing, was both a physical place as well as a metaphor for Jacob's inner experience, the unconscious. The place of glowing is our spirit within.

Vs 11 tells us he came to a certain place and stayed the night. The KJV says he lighted or impinged upon a certain place. Impinge means to intrude upon or into an area ostensibly belonging to someone

else. He has been led into a place or state of being that wasn't familiar to him. He stays there that night because the sun had set. In other words, the light had departed. He selected a stone for a pillow. Why? Because that is what is used to mark the headstone of the dead when buried. Jacob then laid down in this state and slept, the term Jesus used most often to describe the dead.

This event is a description of mankind in death, and in this condition, he entered into the unconscious state of the world of dreams where God often speaks to man and where any and all things are possible. You don't think you can fly? Try telling that to your dreams.

Vs 12 tells us he dreamed of a ladder that reached from the earth to heaven with the messages (Angels) of God ascending and descending upon it.

This is a picture of the mind of man being connected to God and His Word reaching the depths of our being as it makes a circuit between brain and spinal cord. It's the double helix of our DNA strands that is bathed in God's light and life. The word ladder can also be translated as staircase. But what I find most interesting is its root means a mound or to exalt. I believe what Jacob was seeing in his dream was imagery of the crucifixion with Christ on the cross set atop the mound or hill of Golgotha...Christ being the portal in which life streams through the torn veil from heaven to earth and at the same time exalting the fallen mindset of mankind to its original design. Father, Son and Spirit reconciling the world to themselves.

Vs 13 And Yahweh stood over him and once more repeated His covenant saying even as you lie in sleep (of death) I will make good my promise to you and your descendants.

Vs 14 Your descendants shall cover the entire earth and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. What is the seed? Gal 3:16 "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say unto seeds as of many but as of one; and to your Seed who is Christ." The Seed is Christ for He is the promise of Gen 3:15 "And I will put enmity between your seed and her seed and He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel."

Vs 15 Behold "I am" is with you and will keep and protect you and bring you again (Hebrew "shuwb", Greek "anothen") to this land to do what I have spoken. That is the same promise as was made to Abraham, that their descendants would number as the sands of the seas and the stars of heaven. The new Webb Telescope has now peered far beyond what Hubble revealed and shown us that every galaxy consists of a trillion stars and that the universe contains at least a trillion galaxies. The numbers are mind boggling to comprehend but this is what we do know at this point. Could man in his fallen condition be able to proliferate himself in such amazing fashion. No, it would be impossible, therefore,

when God says I will bring you again to this land it is the word shuwb and means to return to. It's the same as anothēn in Greek, used by Jesus when speaking to Nicodemus in reference to how a man must be born "again" or restored to his original design to enter the Kingdom.

As an aside we read in Jeremiah 18:2 "Arise and descend into the potter's house (the kingdom of imagination) and there I will cause you to hear My words."

3 Then I went down to the potter's house (the dwelling place of imagination) and there He was making something at the wheel. This may be a potter's wheel, but the word also means a midwife's stool presenting the picture David describes in

Psalms 22:9 "You are He who took me out of the womb 10 I was cast upon You at birth." The picture of newborn intimacy is unmistakable.

Continuing in vs. 4

And the vessel He made of clay was corrupted in His hand, so He made it again or returned it to another vessel, a new one, as it seemed good to the potter to make." He redeemed and restored mankind.

Back to Genesis 28,

Vs 16 Jacob awoke from his sleep of death and said surely Yahweh is in this place and I did not know it. The Midrash, another Jewish translation reads, "The Lord was in this "I" that I did not know."

Very interesting statement especially for that time. First that Yahweh was in me, and I had no idea. It echoes Paul's statement in Col 1:26 "the mystery which was hidden from ages and generations but now has been revealed to the saints 27 that is, Christ in you the hope of glory."

Secondly he refers to an "I" that he did not know. The fallen mindset of Adam is completely alien to and fairly unrecognizable of our original design for the natural man doesn't perceive of the things of the Spirit. It is separated from God and filled with darkness, thus we are blinded to the nature of our true selves. As Jacob stated, he did not know the self in which Yahweh resided because it was unrecognizable. We do not realize how dark the darkness is until it is penetrated by light. Nor do we know we've been asleep until we awake. We read in

Ps. 17:15 "As for me I will see your face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." Those of us gathered here today now see His face in righteousness and have awakened to His image and likeness.

Or I will be face to face with You and be whole when I awake from my sleep and realize my image and likeness in You. These were prophetic statements for both Jacob and David in their day but nonetheless just as true in ours. For most of the world is still shrouded in sleep in their minds and completely unaware of the finished work of Christ in their lives. We read in

Hosea 6:

1 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

3 Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD; his going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

So, we see clearly in these first two verses that restoring us from the sleep of death was His doing and His alone. These are the only passages in the OT that specifically speak to the three days in the grave. In verse 1 He has taken us into Himself as He is placed in the tomb, thereby including us in His death. In verse 2 He revives us in Himself as He is revived, and in verse 3 we come to know Him in resurrection life.

"He will come forth as showers that water the earth" is an allusion to Isaiah in which he describes the rain that comes down and waters the earth as the seed that never returns void.

How does Our relationship to God work exactly? What is it we come to know in our new life? Do we simply stroll along trying to do the right thing. We know that we don't follow a set of rules and laws. Man tried that and it didn't turn out well. "The law came in that sin might abound." It became bondage. It was never God's intention to bind us from the freedom to pursue our true selves. When we find it we discover it was by way of knowing who He is. The desire to seek our identity reveals our unique selves. He says we should ask what we desire, and He will give it to us that we may be filled with joy. The only commandment given us in the New Covenant by Jesus is to love one another even as I have loved you. Fair enough since to do so is to express the true essence of who and what we are. But what

about our daily existence? There are many decisions and choices to be made every day in the average life. How do they manifest in relationship?

Let's examine the world that the Creator has formed and look to see how it actually works. We live in a contingent universe meaning everything is related and everything individual affects the whole. Each of us affects one another. It's the one God brought forth into existence but not one that He rules over as a despot or dictator. As a matter of fact, He has given free rule of earth over to man. He says in

Ps. 8:5 "For You have made him a little lower than the Elohim (or Trinity) and have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have rule over the works of Your hands and have put all things under his feet."

If you've wondered why the world is a place that appears mostly mad at times, here you have it. The "world" is insane in the sickness of sin. But be comforted for

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you will have peace; in the world you have trouble; but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world."

Most of our brethren in the western church subscribe to a closed creation. It says that God causes all things either expressly or tacitly. To say otherwise would impugn God's sovereignty. Therefore, when people die in a tragedy such as the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria it was God's will. Perhaps His judgement on them. That being for men, women and babies to die, many slow agonizing deaths. Or a young mother whose toddler wandered in one fateful moment from her watchful eye into the street and was killed instantly by an oncoming car; try telling her that she should accept it because it's God's will. Then try to convince her that God is love. This is nothing more than the image of Caesar giving a thumb's up or down as to who lives or dies by arbitrary decree. We do not believe in a God of this disposition but a God of goodness and compassion for all. It's only in the freedom that love can exist. Otherwise, it is bondage. He does not cause all things; He causes all things to work to the good. In His Justice He makes all things right. Every life mentioned in these examples has already been restored. He doesn't take life He is the source of life.

What does God's plan for you look like specifically? A plan when properly devised shouldn't allow for error or failure. It's designed for maximum efficiency and little to no waste especially if it's God's plan. It's this very idea that keeps many good Christians in a demoralized state. They compare God's

plan to their lives and realize they've fallen short. Often way short. I know mine has. They spend more time asking God for forgiveness for not staying on track with His perfect plan than in experiencing the peace, joy, and righteousness of oneness with God in the Spirit.

But we should all take comfort and rejoice for God's design for our lives isn't a plan but a story in which Christ is the author and finisher. He will see through. Why? Because your life is His life. You are a unique expression of divine life. It isn't a record of all that we've done right or wrong in our lives. It's an epistle written on the hearts of all we have touched. Both the good and the not so good. Everyone will be refined by fire and seasoned with salt to greater or less degree. The fire to purge and cleanse and the salt to preserve. All will go through this so there will be no judging of one another. He will judge by His finished work.

Rev 20:12 "...and they were judged each one according to His works"

For He will wipe away every tear and there will be no more death, sorrow or crying. The hurt and pain caused both by us and to us will be wiped away.

How do our stories unfold? Because we exist in a contingent world, we have available to us innumerable possibilities. You see if something is possible, it isn't certain and if certain it is no longer a possibility. A contingent creation is an open creation, one designed by God to possess unlimited possibilities that may be acted upon. I qualify that by saying that even in our freedom God will not allow us to destroy ourselves with our behavior. It's the question of Athanasius in the early church because the creature He has fashioned is suffering so, "What was a good God to do?" The answer of course was the Incarnation when He fully became one of us, taking our suffering into Himself. God has always been the underground river of living water that flows through the history (or story) of every man.

We read some startling statements in Jeremiah concerning God and His thoughts toward man.

Jer 7:31 "And they have built the high places of Tophet which is in the valley of Hinnom (or Gehenna) to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind."

And in

Jer 19:5 "they have also built the high places of Baal to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind."

Whenever we see the same thing said twice, we know to pay particular attention. In this case it's the children of Israel sacrificing their children to a false god in the Valley of Gehenna which God renamed afterward to the Valley of Slaughter. To murder is a heinous act but when it involves children it is especially evil. We see some interesting responses by God. First is what we would expect, that being shock and dismay at their actions, as well as His disavowing in any way that He would ever command such a thing. Certainly understandable. But in both verses He ends it with "it never even occurred to Me that they would do this." Consider what He said and let it sink in. It never entered His mind that they would do such a thing! But I thought God knew all things. Furthermore, I thought He caused all things yet He clearly tells us here that that isn't the case. But there are verses such as the following that seem to counter this, but do they?

Isaiah 46:9 "...I am God and there is none like Me

10 Declaring the end from the beginning..."

I believe God is making the statement through the prophet that only They (the word is Elohim) can do what God can do. Announcing with certainty the end (omega) from the beginning (alpha) or that which is finished by He who began it. That God would rescue His creation from death and restore it to its first fruits and nothing would prevent that.

This is more of a statement of Who He is than knowing the future. He is love and nothing can separate us from Him.

We see just a few short chapters later in Jeremiah a beautiful promise.

Jer 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you declares the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope (assurance)."

So, if there are things that God doesn't seem to know ahead of time what are we left to think? That which is certain are those things that pertain to the character and essence of God, that being His love. But the way he interacts with man and our stories is uniquely varied because it encompasses vast possibility.

Quantum physics has come to play a role in our modern thinking as it relates to this phenomena. Science has shown that the subatomic world, invisible to us, consists of a vast field of possibilities. An array lies before us with every choice we make because as we consider our decision and visualize outcomes the smallest particles in known existence called quarks begin to respond to being observed and as a result form patterns. Experiments reveal that these same particles that are everywhere and in more than one place at one time are random and free floating. From this we can see that when our thoughts are birthed in our imagination these fundamental particles of energy respond by giving them shape and form. This is a very brief and simplified view of quantum as some of you who know much more about it will attest. Is this, however, what is meant by being co-creators in Christ. If so it's the result of God designing creation in such a fashion.

Be certain that I'm not saying that God can't see the future based simply on His omniscience. Just as I am able to predict further into the future than my toddler granddaughter, so is His ability beyond ours. What I'm talking about is God forcing humanity into a preset mold and saying that is our future.

I believe that a relationship in which God knows everything ahead of time and we're to find a pathway according to His plan is nothing more than watching mice in a maze looking for cheese. It's much more Him observing us as a spectator than participating as a loving Father.

On the other, if our future isn't set nor certain in this life then we can live in the moment instead of fearing tomorrow or worrying did I go left yesterday when God intended that I go right. We face every blessing, trial, and challenge with the absolute assurance of Him in me and me in Him. We experience life to its fullest as we imagine the possibilities available to us and a good and loving God with whom our thoughts join together to provide a future and a hope as we create it together. He walks with us every step of the way with every breath of each day.

"Therefore, I say to you whatever things you ask in prayer, believe that you've received them then you will have them." Mark 11:24

I realize that many of you have a difficult time accepting that based on past or present struggles and tragedies, but I assure you of one thing. By nature of the fact that you're here today is proof that God is working in your life. Imagine the thin threads that He has orchestrated within your will, because He doesn't force us to do anything, to bring you here today. He has brought you to the house that proclaims that God is love. In Christ the door to His loving Father has been opened in your life to everything that pertains to life and godliness. Live in expectancy of His goodness.

Jesus said, "If the Son makes you free you are free indeed." John 8:36

The Mirror translates it with a little different emphasis.

"With the freedom found in Sonship there is no pretense." It's absolutely real.

Just as Jacob experienced, so now have you, for The Lord is in this "I" that I did not know."

Amen