

“Discovering Your Identity” - Genesis 28:16-22 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

According to the Rev. Mike Slaughter who wrote the book, when we talk about Dare to Dream and dreaming God’s dream, it honors God, blesses people and brings us joy. Have you begun to dream God’s dream? God uses our restlessness to get our attention. In our dreams, we come up with all kinds of crazy prompts. All kinds of things appear in our dreams. In Jacob’s dream, a ladder appeared. The whole point of this dream is that Jacob saw God at the top of this ladder. Our life dreams are limited by the ceilings of our life pictures. The key is who or what is at the top of your ladder? For many it is the ladder of success and some of us have hit the glass ceiling and there is nothing higher up that ladder for us. Some of us may need to change ladders or visions.

In this vision of God at the top of his ladder, Jacob was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place.’” Awesome happens when you discover your life purpose. That’s called ‘living the dream.’ How awesome is this place when you discover your life purpose. God has a change-the-world-purpose for your life, before you were ever created. Like I said last Sunday, the prophet Jeremiah heard these words from God - “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord.” And Jesus said to the disciples (and us who read the Bible), “The things I do, you will do greater things than these.” And you’re sitting there and thinking, Who Me?

Here’s what God says to Jacob (and to you!). “*I am with you.*” Here’s the key. Remember, our identity: **We are children of God.** Your birthright, however, is the part you are to play specifically in God’s plan. The only way that can happen is by having an intimate relationship with God, the Holy Spirit. That’s why Jesus said to the disciples, “*I’m going away, but I will send to you another helper, counselor, who will be with you and in you.*” What Jacob discovers through God being at the top of his ladder is a revelation of the presence of God. Jacob discovers his true birthright. He comes to believe in and worship God. He takes his pillow stone and erects it as an altar or a memorial stone. We do that with gravestones or headstones. But we also have other reminders at home or the office, do you have sayings or slogans, do you have pictures or souvenirs? This week stop and look and read them all. How have they helped you to get to where you are today? Do they still speak to you, or do you need new ones to lead you forward from here? For Jacob he was doing okay at home but now he is growing up and time to go and seek a wife back in the old country.

Our life mission statements should be our memorial stone a reminder of the work for which we were created and called. It is everlasting, you might say, “It is written in stone.” You can say to God on the Day of Judgment, I finished the work that you called me to do.

Mike Slaughter’s life mission statement (which he discovered when he was 19) has three parts:

- to raise a family that will influence future generations for Jesus
- to raise up a church that will demonstrate the kingdom of God on earth.
- to equip church leaders who will reach future generations.

To help us focus on our God-purpose and life mission statement he asks us to reflect on three questions:

1. Where do you see the greatest need in your neighborhood, your community, or your world?
2. How can you meet that need?
3. What are the gifts you bring, that can accomplish that mission?

Those three questions can help you in developing your own mission statement.

Using words of John Wesley my mission statement is simply:

Do all the good you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.

To help us in our individual discernment I thought it might be helpful for us to remember the mission statement for Mt. Carmel UMC. Did you help develop that a few years ago? I am asking that we put it in the bulletin each week and the newsletters each month to help us remember it and take it to heart as our mission. Let's read it together.

**Together we reach,
transform,
and equip people for a lifelong relationship with Christ.**

There's one more important thing to notice in the scripture from Genesis. The last thing Jacob says to God is, "I will give you 10% of everything that comes into my hand." There will be a personal cost to this God-purpose. We must submit ourselves to God's authority. And it may cost you more than 10%, it may very well cost you everything as you put your whole self into it.!

I am going to pray for you and keep challenging you to go to work on discovering the work that God has set for you, your life mission statement. You don't want to stand before God on Judgment Day and say, "I didn't know what you wanted me to do!" God has created you for a change-the-world-purpose. Isn't it time to discover it? Alleluia and Amen.

Take Time to Reflect Today

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 1/3/23

Take time to reflect today,
On why you were created.
Ask and hear how God would say,
Your purpose might be stated.
Dare to dream and to live it.
Give it all you can give it.

"Just who are you?" We might ask,
Of a stranger that we meet.
What is your God-given task,
That God asks you to complete?
As we ask each other's goals,
May it bless both of our souls.

We should ask, "just who am I,
And what is my God-purpose?"
In the end, I'll be judged by,
How close I followed Jesus.
More than only talk the talk,
May I also walk the walk!