

Surely The Lord is Here (Genesis 28:10-22)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2023

Preacher: Albert Tang

[0 : 00] Amen. So chapter 28, verse 10.

There above it stood the Lord, and he said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.

He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. Early the next morning, Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

[1 : 56] He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God, and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house.

And of all that you give me, I will give you a tip. And this is the word of God. Thank you.

Okay, while you were sharing, were there any really desperate prayer needs for one another?

You know, when you were facing the new year, any big challenges that you really want God to enable you to walk into them?

Relationships? Financial situations? There are. I mean, health? Mental health?

[3 : 17] Challenges? At work? Future? We'll pray for you, friend. Yeah.

I mean, to a lesser or greater degree, we face these sort of things in different stages of life. Maybe more so when you get older. Relatively, you know, we are kind of younger, in our 20s, 30s.

But as we age, you know, these will kind of accumulate and getting greater and greater. But the thing is, you know, when we face the future, the unknown future, you know, we're blessed somehow in New Zealand.

You know, yeah, we're very blessed in this place. But still, there are challenges, okay? Is this going to be a happy new year? Or is it going to be a crappy new year?

You know? You know, is the interest rates going to go up? I am actually paying extra in the last year or so, right? Oh, if it goes up another percent, oh, no, I'm going to, I won't be able to dine out.

[4 : 30] All right? But, you know, it's not just financial. It's all sorts. How are we, what did we actually want God to do in this new year for me?

And the thing is, you know, when we pray to God, God hears our prayers, all right? Surely He does. But He doesn't answer always according to our will, right? And it's good because He's God, okay?

But the thing is, how, if these sort of things, we really want to praise, you know, to God, but He doesn't answer. So what happens? Okay, I'm okay, maybe financially, I'm maybe okay, but I'm stuck in the deep waters and relationship of my health or at work.

What do I do? Maybe this passage we've just read, the experience, the encounter of Jacob could shed light upon our lives, okay?

Instead of asking God to change all these sort of things, we're in that situation. What do we do? Maybe we ask God to open our eyes.

[5 : 45] And maybe I'm the one that needed changing. All right? So we have, thanks, Jesus, for reading that for us. And this passage was really saying that the Lord has really revealed to Jacob, in his situation, he was fleeing for his life, okay?

He was not out for a picnic or a trip, okay? He was actually running for his life. And in his very uncertain future, what was he going to encounter in the future?

He would know. But God revealed to him and comforted him and assured of his presence and his protection. Wow. That would mean a lot for this Jacob who is running, fleeing for his life.

And I think this is not just for Jacob, all right? This promise of God, the promise of God, his comfort, his assurance, his presence, his protection is also for us too.

I don't know. We may not be in that desperate situation as bad as Jacob. But we all encounter different difficulties, you know, in different degrees, all right?

[7 : 01] But God's presence, God's assurance is true, all right? Whatever, whenever, however the circumstances, we can truly trust him.

Believe me, I think I have lived three times as old as you guys, all right? And God has been faithful, all right? When I was your age, I would never, never thought I would have encountered things, challenges that really above me, all right?

It was like deep waters. I wouldn't know how to handle that. It was deep, deep. But God, by faith, he lifted me up and given me strength, all right?

So whatever we are encountering at the moment, let's trust in him, all right? So, Genesis, all right?

We had six months of Genesis last year. This time, starting this time last year. And you remember that word, Toledo, all right? Remember?

[8 : 12] No, we'll get back to Pastor William. All right? But understanding Genesis is not about creation, okay? It's about God's doing through the different Toledo accounts, generations, okay?

So these were the 11 accounts, generations, records of God's doing in the 50 chapters of Genesis, all right?

Starting from 2 to 37. Actually, 37 right up to 50. So the first chapter to the third verse of the second chapter really was just an introduction.

It was not the main thing. So don't mistake the author. You know, he never intended to argue with the science, you know, about creation, right?

It was merely an introduction. But all these things, and from chapter 2 right down to 50, he was recording a very structured writing, all right?

[9 : 24] He purposefully written these 11 Toledo accounts with how God was working through in different circumstances, through different people in their different generations, okay?

Some were genealogies, some were stories. But God was working right through. Now, having this understanding, then we read and we understand Jacob's story.

If we don't, we just think, oh, this is a random thing. Jacob, oh yeah, he's the son of Isaac. Isaac's son of Abraham. Okay, this family. What's this family's got to do with me, right?

So if we understand the purpose of the author of Genesis, we know God has been working through his purpose right through and choosing this family of Israel, right?

Israel actually is the name of Jacob. God changed Jacob's name as Israel. But he was from the father as Abraham, the chosen race, okay?

[10 : 30] And what was the purpose? The purpose was Genesis 3.15. What was Genesis 3.15?

Remember? Bible quiz. Seeds of the woman. All right? And seeds of the serpent. Remember?

Remember? And it was actually the first announcement of salvation for mankind in the whole book of Genesis, right?

And that was the purpose of God to work through these people and through these generations to work out that seed of the woman, the savior for mankind.

We don't know why God would choose Israel. But that he's God. It's not for me to doubt, okay? But he, why didn't he choose Chinese?

I don't know. Why didn't he choose Kiwis? I don't know. But he's God. But he chose this Abraham and his family from a person, a family, a clan, a nation.

[11 : 46] And out of this, the savior of the world, Jesus, arrived in due time. All right? So, we see, this is chapter 25, the account of Abraham's son Isaac.

Okay? And Jacob was from Isaac. So, now, having this understanding, then, we read the story. This is exegesis.

All right? We don't just take it out and, oh, this is, let's apply to my situation. No, no, no. We need to, to read, understand what the Bible was really saying. Then, we understand the full meaning behind it.

Then, we apply to our lives. Right? Okay. The story says, Jacob was running for his life. Okay? From Beersheba, that was his home.

He stopped there at chapter 28, Bethel. You can see around about 100K from here, from Beersheba to Bethel, about from here to walk with, walking.

[12:56] Okay? He couldn't take many with him. He was fleeing for his life. All right? He had to go to Padam Aaron. That is where his uncle, Kau Fu, was, because mom told him, you go to flee because your brother's going to kill you because you've done a bad thing.

Actually, it was not Jacob who done a bad thing. Mom, thank you very much. It was you. Right? All the plot, everything was prepared by mom. And he was the one that, you know, he was the victim. All right? And then Esau tried to kill him. And mom said, run, run for your life. Mom, you should run. Why do I have to run? You know? But that was his situation. All right? And he had to go, had to flee, and going to stay with his uncle, Laban.

Right? So this is the situation. Now imagine, Jacob, what was his thinking? How he was, what sort of things he had in his mind?

And how, I mean, how would he feel? Do we understand, actually, how Jacob would have felt?

[14:08] Right? In chapter 10, in verses 10 to 11. Oh, we lost all the verses. Never mind, we read. Okay, we read.

In verses 10 to 11, Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night, because the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. All right? Now, I think from old, we have kind of, I mean, from young, when you went through Sunday school, or the sermons, or you read the Bible, you have the impression, what was Jacob like?

Was he a good guy or a bad guy? He's a cunning man. He liked to grab. I would not like to have a sibling, a brother like him, all the time, he was trying to cheat me, right?

Yeah. I would slap him on his face, right? All the time, we think, well, Jacob was a bad guy. Right? But try, try to understand, try to understand the family he was brought up.

[15:35] Okay? Now, Abraham, a very famed family, clan. Isaac, very wealthy, very rich, very reputed, and he had the promise of God, right?

Right? But the thing is, in this male dominant society, his dad would never understand, never, because he was the only son.

So he would have inherited everything from Abraham, his grandpa. Everything. That's why, you know, Isaac would have no worries.

All the time, he was just meditating in the field. he had no challenges, no competitions. But for Jacob, he was the younger son.

Esau was the older one. And the male dominant society, everybody say, Esau, Esau, Esau, Agor. You know, everyone would say, just bypass Jacob.

[16:49] Nobody would notice Jacob. And this is why Jacob had to survive, had to do something, had to make himself known. Dad, I'm here.

Can you understand? You know, we read about Esau, it was cheating Esau, right? For birthright, with this soup.

He didn't actually, was pointing an arrow to him, look, give me your birthright, I was going to shoot you. No, it was Esau that asked him, give me this, this soup, I'm so thirsty, I'm so tired, give me this.

And, Jacob, being Jacob, all right, okay, exchange. And it was, it was a fair exchange, right?

He asked for it. I mean, Jacob did not set it up. He asked for it. He was just boiling his soup here, wanting to enjoy it for himself.

[17:55] But Jacob said, and Esau said, give me this, I can exchange it, it was a birthright to me. And he gave it to him. And for this situation, just prior to his plight, it was his mom.

Overheard, dad was going to give his blessing to big brother, right, Esau. And mom said, oh no, hey, Esau, Esau, you know, I mean, Jacob, look, he's going to do this.

Look, look, I'll give you this and this. And, and, you know, Jacob had no idea. Mom, would it work, really? Yeah, of course it worked. I'll, I'll, I'll make up this, this, this, this, this, the broth, and I'll give you this brother's clothes.

And you just go in there, you're, you know, your dad is half blind, you know, you can go in there, you can cheat him. It was all mom's fault, it was not him. And, can you identify with him?

It's a very complex situation, he was, right from birth. Just four people, family, so messy, so chaotic, so chaotic, right?

[19 : 06] Mom, yes, mom really loved, liked her, liked him, but dad, actually, liked, big brother, Esau, instead.

And in that situation, everybody was, having their focus, upon, Esau. And, you knew how much, he had to struggle, he had to strive.

Surely, I mean, materialistically, there was no worries. But, we don't live on bread alone, right? And, it's well, and it's fulfillment, as a person, you know, it's, yeah, recognition, and everything.

I mean, Jacob was just one, to make himself known, in this family, in the clan. And, and, maybe, some of us, can identify with that.

Right? I struggle, all my life. Always, other people, financially, relationship, and the gifts, and the gifting, and the talents, I'm just nobody.

[20 : 21] I'm nobody, nobody in my family. I'm nobody in my church. I'm nobody, in amongst my friends. Every time, I have to copy, other sayings, and, yeah, they laugh.

I don't know why, but I laugh as well. Would that be you? And, always jealous, or envy, others gifts, what, yeah, God's been blessing him, but, I'm just, yeah, I'm just nobody.

Yeah, we're like Jacob, in, Bethel, just, fleeing, for our lives.

But the thing is, God came down. God came down, and, revealed to him, through a dream, okay, and, which he saw a stairway.

I mean, God does reveal himself, sometimes, through, signs, or dreams, sometimes, he, reveals himself, through other means, but we need to check, you know, especially with these, special, supernatural signs, and dreams, we need to check, whether they are, in line with the Bible, right, in line with the truth.

[21 : 48] But, he does. And sometimes, supernaturally natural, he will reveal himself. Maybe in your group, later on, they, I have, I'm stuck in this sort of situation, pray for me.

And, and maybe, just God, would just reveal himself, through your prayers, and fellowship, with one another. But for me, this, dream thing, actually happened, with my mom, quite a bit.

All right? And, one of the dreams, God directed to him, actually, affected, whether, I was, actually going to, study theology, or not. And that was quite amazing.

When I, when I, felt inspired, to go to Bible school, mama would say, no, no, no, no, no, we're saving God here. No, no, there's no way. The next morning, she comes to say, if God wants you to go, I can't stop you.

Because she had a dream. All right? So, it's not, I mean, it's not about the dream. It's not even about the stairways. Okay? But it's God, who revealed.

[22 : 51] And the, in the following words, that God said to Jacob, was very, very important. Firstly, God said, I am the Lord, the God of your father, Abraham, and God of Isaac.

I will give you, and your descendants, the land of which you are lying. Okay? Now, when we read the Old Testament, we all know, God is God of, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Right? These were the patriarchs. Okay? But for him, at that time, it was only Abraham, and Isaac. And maybe Esau, but God said, no, I am the God of father, of your father, Abraham, and God of Isaac.

But, verses 14 and 15, and you are included. You are not, nobody. I remember you.

Right? your descendants, your descendants, will be like the dust of the earth. And you will spread out, to the west, east, north, south, and all the peoples, on earth, will be blessed, through you, and your offspring.

[24 : 04] Well, resonate? Chapter 12, similar promises, to Abraham. Abraham. This promise, extended, not just to his dad, but not to Esau, but to him.

And all the times, he felt, he was nobody. But God said, you know, you are going to be blessed. You are in this situation, you don't know the future, you, you are very uncertain, you, you may be very fearful, I am with you.

So, this revelation, God really spoke to him. I am the, the, the covenant God, the God of your grandpa, the God of your father, and your God.

I established, the covenant, with your grandfather, to the people, Israel. Of course, he, he, he, he, he didn't know, the full picture, at that time.

All right? But this, Yahweh, always, the Bible, in the Old Testament, used Yahweh, Ye, Wo, Wa, okay? It's, it's, it's the covenant God, that was stressed.

[25 : 22] All right? And also, it's not just your, your clan, your family, but you, you're not forgotten. All your lives, you try to survive, to strive, to be known.

Yes, I remember you. I'm going to bless you. Yes, you're going to be, away, you're going to, yeah, you're running for your life, but I will bring you back, one day.

I am, the great, I am, here, not just in Bathsheba, but I'm here in Bethel. You're going to Haran, I'll be there as well, and I can bring you back.

He is the, the God, of the heaven, and the earth. Shall we claim that, as well? Brothers and sisters, young people, maybe we're going through struggles, maybe we're not as bad as, you know, as desperate, as, as, as Jacob, but we all have our deep waters at times.

Claim that. The God of the covenant, not just to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through Jesus, he has established this new covenant with us, and we all belong to him.

[26 : 50] We are his church, and he loves his church, not just certain people, not just those who stand up the front, not just those who have titles.

He loves you. You're not for God. You're not small potatoes. Every potato counts for God, right? And, and he holds you in the palm of his hands.

He treats you as the apple in his eyes. You know, we don't need to hide behind the group of certain people.

He knows us by name. And he is the great I am. Claim that. And in Jesus, yeah, this stairway is, you know, some, some Bible commentators said, this can be a kind of a type, not real thing, but a type.

Type to kind of symbolize the cross. Jesus said, I'm the way. It's like that letter, you know, the, the angels going up and down, but up there, God was there.

[28 : 06] And, yeah, through Jesus, we have this stairway, this way that we can go to the Father. And this is why we can claim, we can claim the old promises of God to us in our lives, right?

I don't know. We cannot promise, the world political leaders cannot promise how, what 2023 will be like. With COVID, will they be under control?

We don't know. Finance situation, all right? Interest rates going to go up another percent. Are you going to, we're going to, we're going to give another several hundred dollars a week, all right?

But we don't know. But what we can, we can lay all our trusts in God and see how, how the reactions of Jacob, very interesting, all right?

He had a realization and then he had, he, he expressed it in an action and then we had, he had a vow that he prayed to God.

[29 : 15] Okay? In verse 16, he suddenly, he realized when he woke up, it was half, you know, it was middle of the night. Okay? He, he got up after the dream. Wow!

Surely the Lord is in this place. I was not even aware of it. And then he, he was afraid. Can you imagine? Of course you were afraid when you see the awesome God, right?

When the awesome God revealed himself to you. You know, Isaiah, walk, you know, I'm going to die, you know, the holy, holy, holy, I'm going to die, you know.

Surely when we, face to face with the holy God, we, we are fearful. Yes. And, and he realized that the awesome God was there.

And then the next day, the next morning, when he got up, and he did something. Because he realized that this awesome God was here, he was in fear, and he did something.

[30 : 21] He just picked up the rock which he put on his, his head on, and he pulled it up and made that a pillar.

I, I don't know how big the pillar was, how big was the rock he was actually trying to sleep on. And some commentators said, it could not stand by itself. It had to help other, held it up with other stones.

Okay. And I don't know where he, where he got the oil from. I don't know. Yeah. And, but the thing he did was to commemorate the holy, the fearful God that he just met.

In case one day he will come back, he will remember this is the house of God. Now, I think this, this reminds us, you know, when we realize certain aspects, attributes of God, and I think we do need to express that with actions.

When we say, Lord, I love you, at least we need to express in some ways of loving God. We can't just say, verbally say, I love you, God.

[31 : 42] You know, treat it with your spouses, you know, just every time you go back home and say, I love you, I love you, I love you, but don't do anything in revealing that love.

You know, that relationship is not going to be too healthy. And lastly, he made that vow. Jacob made a vow. God, if you be with me and watch over me in the journey and give me food, give me, give me clothes, when I return safely, I will do this, this, this, this.

Now, you think, this is very Jacob, right? This is like negotiation, right? And often, don't laugh, we do that often, you know?

But at least, he was honest. Now, remember, this is his first, this was his first encounter. Truly, when first encounter with this awesome God, you're in fear.

He knew nothing about the graciousness of God yet, right? Because that was his first encounter. And God, with all the fullness of his attribute, takes time to really experience.

[32 : 59] And because of his realization, he wanted to do something to honor him. But he also prayed in a very Jacob way, a very, you know, in his, in his spirituality at that time, he could only do that.

But he was honest to, to himself. All right? And then, in chapter 29, 30, and so on, you see, the next 20 years, he matured.

He grew. He was being transformed. So, it was the initial encounter, but he needed to continue to walk, continue to experience, and allow God to continue to transform him.

This is us. All right? We need to be, continue to be changed by God. Sanctification takes time and takes effort.

Now, in the, in the following chapters, and you, we read, he went to his uncle, Levin. He was being cheated, you know. Yeah, it was even stronger, more cunning, yeah, yeah, opponents.

[34 : 18] All right? Seven times, seven years passed, and then another seven years, and ten times being cheated, you know, with the wages, yeah.

And, and all these circumstances only drove Jacob to come to know he cannot trust himself. He had to trust God with all the circumstances, challenges, that came into his way.

And, 20 years later, 20 years later, the Bible says that he left his uncle, and he was planning to return home, right?

And, he was, he took the initiative to send his servant to seek his brother, Esau, and trying to make up the relationship, the broken relationship.

Now, Jacob, 20 years before, he would never do that. He would just run away, all right? But, after 20 years, he was being transformed by God, he turned back and tried to reconcile with his brother.

[35 : 37] Yes, I stole your blessings. I want to make it up. And, he wanted to give him gifts, and those were really large amounts, 200 sheeps, 200 goats, camels, and, you know, it was a lot.

But, the interesting thing was, when he met with his brother, right? When the two brothers embraced, hugged one another, Jacob said, Esau said, brother, I already have plenty, my brother. You don't need to give me all that. And, indeed, I believe Esau had plenty, all right? But, the response from Jacob was like, brother, I want to give that to you, for God has been gracious to me, and I have all I need.

Now, quantity, I don't know who had more, but the thing is, was not in the quantities. It was in the, in hard attitude.

And, these 20 years, Jacob started experiencing God as, as an awesome, fearful God. but 20 years, he knew that God was gracious.

[37 : 12] And, in him, he, he was very much content. Right? The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

It's not in the quantity how God has blessed us. It's in my relationship, my trust in him, because I know he is my provider.

I trust in him. I have all I need. You see how he has been transformed in these 20 years? Same to us.

Today, if you, if God really inspired you, I want to give myself to God. I want to decide, Lord, I'm going to love you, and I'm going to love those not very lovable people.

Maybe at your homes, maybe at work, maybe at church, right? And God hears our prayers. But the next thing, when you come back home, that time you come home, or you want to show love to

somebody who you really want to obey God, to love him or her, and you buy a gift, and you found that the next thing, the gift was dumped in the rubbish bin.

[38 : 44] And then you say, God, I have decided not to buy him any more gifts. I'm not going to listen, talk to him any more. I mean, transformations start from me.

And not in the circumstances or in the people around us. It starts from me. And we realize that and if allow God to change us, right, it's all in me.

And you see everything in a different perspective. This is what happened to Jacob. And I like Hebrews chapter 11 21.

This is a conclusion. By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, many years later on, he blessed each of Joseph's sons, that's his grandchildren, because he realized that the history of salvation runs through his family.

And even though he was, I mean, his grandchildren were in Egypt at the time, he knew one day the family would return.

[40 : 05] All right? So he blessed his son. And I really liked this description. He worshipped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

self. He was old, he was fragile, but all these years of his experience, encounters, being transformed by God, in his old age, even he was fragile, he's holding on his staff, his crutches, and he worshipped God.

may we all, younger people, or me, older folk, if one day you see Moksi holding his crutches, coming, walking into PCBC, Moksi, how are you?

I would truly say to you, I'm very glad I can still come and worship the Lord, God, because all this life, he has been faithful.

Would you open your heart, and ask God to change you, and to face the future?

[41 : 27] He's the most trustworthy person, and he can transform you, and direct you. We pray.

Father, of all these things in life, we cannot truly have certainty, we cannot hold on to one thing, we can hold on to you.

You're the most trustworthy God, so help us as we face the unknown future. Lord, help us to have faith, surely, the Lord is in this place, in our troubles, in our difficult times, in our complex situations. Lord, you are here. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.