

Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2020 (176 Years)



Week of June 28th

We will continue sending out this combination of the newsletter and bulletin to keep you up to date on announcements, prayers, needs and scheduled activities for those that are uncomfortable to attend service yet.

Included will be the usual newsletter information along with prayers, scripture and a sermon.

We hope that you can utilize this format to keep up to date while being away from actual services, meetings, activities and watching the online sermon.

Please be in prayer for the end of the coronavirus and healing for those affected by it.



Bedford Presbyterian Church
serving Christ since 1844

A Biblically Guided Christian Community,

Loving God, Loving Others,

Serving the World & Growing Disciples

**If you are watching the online service this Sunday morning,
please have this bulletin ready to follow the service.**

The Approach to God

Prelude

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

Bill Rutledge

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: And Also with you

Welcome and Announcements

- Please remember that when the Prelude begins the service is being recorded. We ask that you please refrain from talking when the service starts, as conversation can be heard on the recording.
- Please adhere to the re-gathering notes during service to keep yourself and everyone else safe.
- Please let the ushers dismiss you at the end of service.
- Something More will resume, Tuesday at 4:30 pm, virtual and in-person
- Any other announcements are printed at the back of this bulletin.

Call to Worship:

One: This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

All: Happy are those who give thanks to God.

One: I was glad when they said to me "Let us go into the house of the Lord!"

All: Happy are those who give praise to God.

One: With joyful hearts who know how gracious God has been to us,

All: Let us adore the ever living God!

Introit

"Let Us Adore"

Praise Team

Prayer of Confession:

Forgiving God, we confess that we have judged one another, assuming the worst when we have been granted the opportunity to do our best. We have dismissed the good work of our sisters and brothers because we feared the challenges of larger ministries. Grant us an open heart and mind to listen to Your angels, who in human form have called us to serve You better. Open our eyes daily to the opportunities all around us, to fulfill Your kingdom ministries. These things we pray, trusting in Your mercy and guidance. Amen

Assurance of Pardon:

The apostle John wrote to us: Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

(1 John 3:18)

One: Friends believe the good news

All: Through Christ we have been forgiven and reborn to a new life of service in His name.

Gloria

"Glory Be to the Father"

Proclaiming the Word of God

Time for all God's Children

Solo

"How Deep the Father's Love"

Maggie DeWitt

Scripture:

Genesis 28: 10-29:1

Sermon:

Finding the Stairway to Heaven

Portions adapted from "Too Blessed to See God," by David Yarbrough @ SermonCentral.Com



One of the most popular images out of the Old Testament which has – by a multitude of classical paintings – entered western culture's subconscious is Jacob's dream of the Stairway to Heaven. But very few people know the real story behind the picture.

In 1971, the band Led Zeppelin released "Buying the Stairway to Heaven" which in theory was a critique on how a wealthy culture thinks that enough money can buy anything. But their most popular song got away from them, becoming more of an epitaph for the crashing dreams of the passing 60's hippie culture amidst the rise of the Me Generation; it is truly a catchy yet depressing song.

For Jacob, who first saw this vision of a stairway to Heaven and who had his own conversation with the Creator of the universe, it was a terrifying yet encouraging event that changed his life thereafter. The Stairway to Heaven tells the story of a man who finally found his own personal faith in the God of His fathers' and who was guided and blessed by that relationship for the rest of his still very tumultuous life.

To pick up Jacob's story from last week: with mother Rebekah's instigation and support he succeeded in stealing the blessing that father Isaac had intended for Esau his elder twin. But now with the revenge seeking Esau plotting to murder his thieving sibling, Mom and Dad hurriedly send Jacob far away in the pretense of finding a bride for him from among distant relatives. What Rebekah had hoped would only be a short absence – until Esau's anger quieted down – for Jacob turned into twenty years of exile and he would never see his beloved mother again in this lifetime.

But these events are all ahead of him as Mama's boy Jacob, now finds himself traveling alone into a distant and unknown future. Remember that last week we said there was a powerful overarching message coming out of all these stories of Abraham and his descendants which is that, God's sovereign plans and promises will always succeed regardless of any human opposition or deservedness. As Proverbs would remind us ...

You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.

Proverbs 19:21 -NLT

We have already seen this truth played out in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, but we will clearly see it in the lives of Jacob and his son Joseph. Keeping that in mind, let us now turn to another lesson which we can take from today's episode of the Stairway to Heaven which is in accordance with His purposes, that **God has promised His presence, protection, and provision will guard and bless us His children for all our lives regardless of how we may or may not seem to be getting along in the world.** But sometimes we grow too comfortable to notice this, so it takes a period of hardship to remind us.



Here then is Jacob, the spoiled rich kid who already had more than he ever needed or wanted, who never really had to work a day in his life and who had dreamed up all these schemes for his successful future, now done in by his own trickery. How ironic! Jacob who has succeeded in grabbing both the firstborn's right of inheritance and the family blessing, can't go home to claim either of these.

For the first time in his life, he is completely alone, with few possessions, not even a comfortable tent and no servants to meet his needs. Jacob, who preferred the safe easy life, is now traveling by himself to who knows where. As the sun sets, he's too afraid to even go into the nearby town, so instead he crawls into some hidden crevice on a mountainside and lays down for the night with a rock as his pillow.

Have you ever been there, out in the middle of nowhere? Been that alone? Been that unsure of the future? That embarrassed with your past? Thinking no one understands you, no one's been this way before? Jacob has been there, just lying out there among the rocks, trying to get through the night.

Here also is something else Jacob doesn't have to help with his journey. Despite all his years growing up hearing the stories of God from his father Isaac and grandfather, Abraham, apparently Jacob never caught the family faith. While he might have inherited the family fortune, he never personally understood the true source of all these blessings. Notice what he says to his father Isaac while impersonating Esau in order to steal the blessing (Genesis 27:19-20):

*Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." Isaac asked, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" Jacob replied, "The Lord **your** God gave me success,"*

Jacob may have grown up a direct descendant of Abraham, but at this point he seems to share very little of Abraham's faith.

All that, however, is about to change.

Jacob may have been wide awake in all his scheming, trying to secure his own future. His eyes may have been open, but up until now he has been spiritually asleep and he didn't even know it. Now, a lonely destitute fugitive, he lays down his head, closes his eyes, and as best as we can tell, **God speaks to him for the first time in his life.**

And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and

your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’ (Gen.28:13-15)

In this time and place of his greatest need, God gave Jacob four specific unconditional promises:

I am with you and will not leave you.

I will take care of you wherever you go.

I will multiply your descendants, who will possess this land and bless the world.

And I will – eventually - bring you back home.

God has just promised this unbelieving schemer His continued **presence, provision, and blessing** for both his and his descendant’s future. Why would He give such unconditional promises to such an undeserving person?

The short answer is that **God’s sovereign plans and promises will always succeed regardless of any human opposition or deservedness**. Good or bad, believing or unbelieving, Jacob was the next necessary person through which God could keep His promises to Abraham and even further back to Eve. This is the usual way God works, He fulfills his promises even through broken, fallible people, and aren’t you glad because that doesn’t rule you or me out.

God said to Jacob: the question is not where have you been? It’s where are you going? And who is going with you?

- You were never alone. I have been and will always be with you.
- I know you’re scared of Esau and your past and you don’t know what dangers lurk in your future. But I’ll protect you in every circumstance in fulfillment of my covenant with your parents.
- I’ll even start working on you right now to protect you from yourself.
- And I’m not stopping until we get this done and you return to this land to continue carrying forward My promised future blessing of Abraham’s heirs.

What must this unconditional promise by the creator of the universe have done for Jacob’s current fears, future hopes and his willingness to believe that God could actually pull all this off?

If you are God’s child, regardless of where you might be right now, physically or spiritually, God has promised the same for you, His continued presence, provision, and blessing until the day He brings you home. God also made these same promises to Israel as He sent them off into exile.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

Jacob didn’t know it yet, but he was walking into exile. For the next 20 years of his life, this formerly spoiled, scheming mamma’s boy would spend his days tending sheep and being constantly out swindled by his even more self-serving father-in-law. But after 20 years, by sheer diligence in his work, and honest shrewdness in his managerial responsibilities, Jacob would

return home with four wives, thirteen children and enough self-earned wealth that he could send a large peace offering ahead to his brother Esau. And most importantly, both Jacob and even those around him acknowledged that in all this he was being blessed by God.

The moral of this story is that God has always promised you His child, His continued presence, provision, and blessing in your life. But it just may take some hard times for you, like Jacob, to realize that you have always had this.

When Jacob woke up, he was now spiritually a different person. To all of God's unconditional promises, Jacob replied with his own conditional promise - the best he could offer at the time. God had given Jacob the same covenant blessing He gave to Abraham, ownership of the land, a countless multitude of descendants, one of which would bless all the nations of the world ... and to bring him safely back home. Jacob's vow was more immediate, for just food, clothing and a safe return, in return Jacob promised to give a tithe of everything he earned back to God.

I would like to tell you that Jacob, from thence forward was a model citizen, a perfect husband and a fair and honorable father. Sadly he is still less than perfect. But now at least he is conscious of his relationship and reliance upon God and that does change everything about his life. Whether he knows it or not, even in the upcoming hard times, Jacob will be far more blessed than his own scheme would ever have taken him.

Maybe God is working the same thing in your life as well. For too long you've walked around, done your thing with no attention to God's presence or power in your life. You've worked hard and played harder, the entire time ignoring the gentle, constant love of God calling you back to Him....

Until, perhaps now, when you're walking through a lonely time to an unknown future, where the only comfort you can find is a rock for a pillow. As you try to find some rest, God keeps interrupting your dreams to make Himself known. Maybe God is trying to wake you up as well.

The stairway to Heaven is not hard to find. It has been right behind you all the time; you just have to spiritually turn around to see it.... or it would be more proper to say "see Him!"

Here's your "AHA" moment from this story. Many years later, Jesus would refer to this same stairway to heaven image in explaining his mission on Earth. While recruiting Philip one of his first disciples, Jesus promised him that he would see many amazing things. *'Very truly, I tell you ...*

you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' John 1:51



Jesus was saying that He is the stairway to heaven. Jesus came to bridge the gap between the Holy God and a sinful humanity. He came down the stairs so that we could go up them. Again, at the end of his ministry, when one of His disciples asked how to find the way to heaven, Jesus replied

'I am the way,
and the truth,
and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

What was merely a dream for Jacob became a reality in Jesus. Jacob saw a vision of God standing beside him. With Jesus we truly now have "Emanuel," God standing with us. He is our stairway to heaven and only by faith in what He has already accomplished for us will we ever be able to climb those stairs. Think about that for a moment and how much such knowledge should change your life forever!

In his letter to the young Church at Ephesus, Paul writes about how the believers' very existence, by their faith in Jesus Christ, has been changed from death to life, from darkness to light ... and so he orders them and us to wake up to this new, blessed reality in our lives and to stay awake, Paul wrote:

*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.
Live as children of light ... Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:8-14)*

If you, like Jacob, have been spiritually sleep walking, now is a good time to wake up, to discover God who has always been in your life and Jesus who came down to become your way back to your eternal home. And might I suggest that if you are just catching this vision then, like Jacob, that you mark the moment by also making a vow, from now on, to stay spiritually awake.

Let me quickly summarize the happy ending of this portion of Jacob's story. After over 20 years of essentially slave labor for his greedy father-in-law, but also recognized both by himself and everyone else all around that he has truly been blessed by God, Jacob now hears and heeds God's command to return home.

On the way home, still fearful of Esau, he puts together a very large peace offering of livestock (goats, camels, cows, and donkeys), and at their eventual meeting Jacob makes a point of **bowing** and addressing Esau as "**my lord**." Eventually Jacob settles near Bethel, where he builds an altar and we assume offers his promised tithe to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone (Genesis 35:3).

While Jacob, who had attempted to steal both the birth-right and the blessing, got none of the immediate family inheritance and ends up bowing to Esau, who had also grown very rich—because he did get all the family inheritance—nevertheless the prophecy given to Rebekah still came true ... some 400 years later. Because their flocks got too big for the same area, Esau eventually moves away to a neighboring country and grows his own family into the nation of Edom (based on Esau's nickname). At the end of his life, Jacob travels down to Egypt where his children will grow into the nation of Israel and after 400 years to return to the promised land (around 1,400 BC).

Around 1,000 BC, Edom as a nation is conquered by Kings Saul and David, thereafter becoming a vassal state of Israel. Then many years later around 200 B.C., after they are again conquered by the post-exilic Jews, the Edomites all convert to Judaism and by tradition are identified with today's Sephardic Jews.

There is a lot more to Jacob's story—but this is enough for today, especially if you are waking up to the fact that God through Jesus has always been with you, to provide for you, to bless you in both good times, or bad until eventually bring you back home.

Let's pray about this.

Song

"Surely the Presence"

Praise Team

Response to the Word of God

Affirmation of Faith

Celtic Creed

We believe in God above us, maker and sustainer of all life, of sun and moon, of water and earth, of male and female. We believe in God beside us, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, born of woman, servant of the poor, tortured and nailed to a tree. A man of sorrows, He died forsaken. He descended into the earth to the place of death. On the third day He rose from the tomb. He ascended into heaven, to be everywhere present and His kingdom will come on earth. We believe in God within us, the Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire, life-giving breath of the Church, Spirit of healing and forgiveness, source of resurrection and of eternal life. Amen.

****Doxology***

Traditional

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

The Sending Forth

Prayers for the People:

All that we are, all that we ever hope to be, all come as a gift from You. So help us now in our giving, in our living and in our service to be freed by that reminder. Receive these offerings that we have gathered from who we are, what we have and for what we hope. Use them and us in Your gracious service for turning this world upon Your axis of providence. This we pray, these we give, in the name of Christ. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Benediction

Postlude

"Oh! For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Bill Rutledge

Concerns- June 28th

- Barnes:** Kim Hedrick- (friend) health issues
- Benton:** Linda Crawford- (friend) cancer, chemo
- Blair:** James Thorne- (scout) rare skin infection, doing better
Katy Neel- (LHS student) scleroderma
Glen Murgacz- (friend) biopsy for bladder cancer
Prayers for Tulsa rally attendees
- Boone:** Jim Hedrick - (friend) recovering from partial lung removal
Michael -(son) out of work during pandemic
Ray Graeber- (Sammy's cousin)- recovering from colon surgery
Nancy Boone- (Sammy's cousin's wife) cancer
- Chryssikos:** Linda Arendt- (neighbor) disabled
- Clarke:** Ben Daniels - (Pat's grandson) deployed to Syria late summer
- Cram:** Winslow's-(friends of Sally) family & medical problems
Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care
Mary Keys- (friend) ICU, blood infection, heart problems, stroke
Military away from home
- DeWitt:** Terry Sharp- (cousin) ceases chemo treatment- hospice
- Diddams:** Lois- problems with medications
Paul (brother)- loss of wife, not doing well
- Dills:** Katy Neel- lymphoma
- Fleming:** family dealing with addiction and self- esteem
Steve Trombecky- (friend) home recovering
Political leaders to never close churches again
- Foster:** Thomasine Davis- (aunt) hospice care
Joyce Abbott- (former member) cancer
Andre Nemenek- (Shepherds table cook) prostate cancer
Ellen- recovering at home, doing well
- Glass:** Ken (Steve Glass' father) fell, broke hip and shoulder
- Goodman:** Barry Owen-(friend) cancer
Randall Sales-(SRHS coach) cancer
Katherine Saunders- (Hugh's daughter) hospice
Family of Catherine- (Betty's sister) passed away
Travel Mercies for Charles and Betty
- Gould:** Jay- recovering from heart bypass surgery
- Harris:** Judy- recovering from throat procedure
- Heinrich:** Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder
Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems
- Koch:** Doris- fell, broken hip, at home
- Kuhn- Kibbey:** Nancy Milton- (friend) cancer, Alzheimer's
Dot- idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, wet macular degeneration
Grandson- alcoholism
- Ledden:** John- heart problems

Mauser: Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems

Steven-(son's boss) going blind

Tom & Betty Clark- downsizing, and Betty has new pacemaker

Norma Jean- (Gayle's sister) broken collar bone

Pat- (Al's sister) diabetes, tested positive for Covid-19

Morris: all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders

Forensic scientists who deal with crime

Rev. Pam Ledbetter-(friend) autoimmune disease

Doris Jean Coble- (cousin) in nursing home

Salley: David Etheridge- (fellow pastor) terminal cancer

Emily Salley- (sister-in-law) invasive breast cancer

Saunders: (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)

Scott- (son-in-law) chemo and radiation

Scheurer: Jim Hedrick-(friend) cancer, partial lung removed

Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer

Stetson: James & family-(son) in Colorado

Stevens: Jackie Landis- heart problems

Toney: Judy- finished radiation

Karen Hyde-(friend) bladder cancer

Mike Gillespie- (friend) hospice care

Cal Rice- (former pastor) bone cancer, refused treatment

Wilkerson: Ricky Wilkerson-(Dan's cousin) cancer

Prayers for those dealing with loneliness

Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation

Prayers for an end of the coronavirus and healing for those infected

Prayers for our divided country and the violence occurring

Prayers to speak and listen to those who are different

June Clerk's Corner



- At last! Elder Scarlett Stevens was ordained and installed during worship on June 14.
- With the reopening of the church, the Sexton's hours have increased from 10 to 13 hours weekly. He continues to cut the grass.
- Office hours have returned to 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Thursday. The Quilters have returned, but Purl Jam will not meet again until fall. Other groups have made sporadic use of the Fellowship Hall.
- It's back! Something More Bible study has resumed on Tuesdays from 4:30-6p. Join the group in person or by Zoom.
- Word of Life Church has scheduled Rick Astle for an in-church Prayer seminar from August 7 – 9. This will be preceded by a Carmen concert on August 6.
- A celebration! Session approved the sanctuary being used for a thanksgiving service as part of the Fosters' 50th wedding anniversary celebration. A catered meal is to follow in the Fellowship Hall. Current COVID-19 protocol will be followed.
- The garage sale has now been rescheduled as a Sidewalk Sale to coincide with Centerfest on September 19. If Centerfest is cancelled, the alternate date will be September 12. Proceeds go to Camps and Conferences.
- Adapting to our time: soon, you can enjoy our church service in real time from home. A gift of \$2,500 for improving the church's video production has been received. Session approved the purchase of a camera and other needed equipment as well as professional installation to make this possible.
- Music to your ears: Special music has been scheduled for each summer worship service
- Rev. Robert McCrae, retired pastor of Galatia Presbyterian Church will preach on July 26.
- Rev. Philip Parker will be preaching on August 9.
- Aloha Sunday is scheduled for August 30 with a BYOB (Bring Your Own Basket) picnic on the lawn after the service.
- Make plans to attend: The Churchmen concert will be September 12 in the Farmers Market
- Look for it: a Donate button is coming to the church web site. You can contribute by credit card with the Presbyterian Foundation charging 2% to process the transaction.
- Two other painless ways to contribute: look for an explanation of how your Kroger and AmazonSmile purchases will also contribute a portion back to the church.
- More repairs coming: The Session is currently gathering bids to repaint the steeple and replace the Fellowship Hall's lighting. Both projects will be costly. The 175th Fund is still available for special contributions please.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Thank you for continuing to send in your contributions and pledges.
You can mail your pledge or contribution or you can drop by the office,
Mon-Thurs between 8 am -12 pm.**

Even though we aren't meeting as normal, **5 ¢ a meal offerings and Heifer** are still welcomed and encouraged. Just mail them in as you do your pledges and contributions, with a note in the memo line.

Do you enjoy yardwork? If you do, we are looking for volunteers to work in the church yard mowing grass, weed eating and doing general yard work. If you are interested, please let the office know.

Something More Returns on Tuesdays



Beginning next Tuesday (6/30) from 4:30 – 6 pm, the "Something More" Bible study returns. Each week we will dig a bit deeper behind the previous Sunday's sermon.... or on whatever else may be on the mind of an attendee. So come with your questions and come with your Bible... but Come! If you feel comfortable, come in person as we continue practice practicing social distancing guidelines. If you still feel the need to keep separate then ZOOM in, we will be able to see you and you will be able to hear us (start zooming in around 4:15). See you next Tuesday in person or on TV. – John

Happy Birthday!!

Helen Heinrich- 4th

Happy Anniversary!!

Philip & Sherry Parker- 28th

