

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

July 19, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 28: 10-19a

Responsive Reading; Psalm 139: 1-12,

Epistle Reading; Romans 8: 12-25

Gospel Reading; Mathew 13: 24-30, 26-43

Sermon Title: **JACOB'S LADDER**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Some dreams are more than just a dream.

*Then he dreamed and behold a ladder was set upon the earth and its top reached to heaven; and there were angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

This is the New King James version of our Old Testament Reading. Jacob's ladder was a vision in a dream but it was more than a dream. It was the revealing of a truth that is too big to ignore.

There is a heavenly sphere of God that is the home of God and the angels, and there is an earthly sphere that was created by God for mankind. These two spheres are connected. God did not create the Earth and the universe and then put it under

glass in a display case for the angels on tour to gawk at and then say to each other. “Boy that is beautiful. Let’s do lunch.”

No. God created Earth and then connected it to Heaven. God and the angels have a continuous access to earth and use it all the time.

These two spheres are as truly connected as if a ladder were attached to each with one end on Earth and the other end in Heaven. The connection is real and it is awesome.

The Psalm reading shows that God’s connection with Earth is not just a spherical connection but a personal connection.

*Lord, you have examined me and you know me. You know everything I do. From far away you understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions. Even before I speak you already know what I will say.*

This connection is not spherical it is personal. God does not only have a physical connection between the Earth and Heaven He has a spiritual connection between every human heart and his own. God knows our heart better than we know our own and he shows us his heart every chance he gets.

This is real and if we are going to be real we cannot ignore the Elephant on the couch. Trouble is real. Paul sees it and Paul talks about it. In Romans 8: 12-25 it says;

*“For if you live according to your human nature, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death your sinful actions, you will live. ..I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.”*

Early Christians seemed to live to die. That is, they seemed to believe that things were so bad on Earth that their only relief would come when they died and went to God. I do not do that. I live to live. I will get back to that later.

Our Gospel reading shows God to be an unbelievable loving God even if that means that he is a bad farmer.

Any farmer worth his salt will tell you that if you weed your field and tear out ten percent of the crop the other ninety percent will yield twice as much as an unweeded crop could ever produce.

The thing is that God has a different set of priorities. God cares more about you, the one plant, than the whole field. He is not worried about how big the yield will be He is worried about how healthy you will be. To put it another way, God cares more about you than he cares about the United States of America. Most people say that the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts but God says that each part is worth more than its percent of the whole. Great God, bad farmer!

OK, now I have to back track. That ladder, the one that I said was real and awesome. That ladder that was not just a dream but a reality. That ladder that WE cannot see. We say the ladder is not a real thing because we can't see it. I have a question for you. Can you see love? Can you see the love that your parents had or have for you? Can you see the love that your spouse has for you? Can you see the love a child has for his or her parents or the love a preacher has for God? Now the big question, is that love you can't see real? You bet your bippy it is!

As to that ladder, while you are betting your bippy on love you can also bet your bippy on that ladder. God has made sure that Earth is a part of Heaven and Heaven is a part of Earth.

We are in God's plan; we are in God's hands. We are in stage one of Heaven, the stage where we have troubles but we have God to help us through them. In stage two and so forth we won't have the trouble but we will have the intense personal connection with our God and our creator. WOW!

I have pretty much covered the connection between God and us as described in the Psalm reading but I have left that trouble in our lives thing kind of hanging.

I said that early Christians seem to live for the reward of dying, but I live for the reward of living.

For those of us who are football addicts COVID threatens to put us in serious withdrawal. I look for some relief and find it in shows about past performances of the Bills. Several of the shows have featured "THE COMEBACK". The comeback is the Bills vs Houston game where Frank Wright brought the Bills back from the greatest deficit in history. The only reason that this is special is because we were being beat so badly. If we had not had the trouble of being beaten so badly we would not have the glory of the greatest comeback in history.

This game was tough to watch but the miracle ending made it all worthwhile. I would not have missed it for the world.

I react to troubles in life in a similar way. When I am going through troubles in life I can't wait to see how God will accomplish THE COMEBACK. If I never had serious troubles I would never see just how great our God really is. This past week I had a back pain so severe that I could hardly walk, and now here I stand. We all have serious troubles and one of God's great gifts to us is that he gave us each other.

Jacob's ladder is real and it is busy. Angels are coming down it all the time to help me and you. It does not matter if you picture angels as winged women, or like the three men that greeted Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or as that friend that miraculously shows up just when you need them most, but they are real and they are

messengers sent from God to each of us just when there seems to be no way out. Thank you, God, and thank you angels. And thank you Jacob for pointing them out to us.

Hallelujah and amen.