

The Beauty of Bethel: Sharing our Sanctuaries
Preacher: Rev. Lauren Lorincz
Date: July 17, 2011

00:00

Famous account of Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28

Jacob rests on a journey, stone for pillow, sees angels climbing up and down ladder in dream

Jacob is most dynamic and human personality in Genesis—half of Genesis is about him!

God promises to give the land to Jacob and his offspring—sacredness of the land

"The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring . . . Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land." (Genesis 28: 13 and 15)

Implications for the descendants' attachment to the land

Jacob blesses this sacred site, makes a pillar from his rock pillow, pours oil on it and blesses it, renames this new sacred site Beth El (House of God)

Beth El becomes national holy site for the Jewish people—at one time it was a rival religious site to Jerusalem

Not unique to only ancient Israel—The Spell of the Sensitive (David Abram)—connection the Aborigines of Australia have with their landscape, "So the sight of particular features in the land activates the memory of specific songs and stories. The landscape itself, then, provides a visual mnemonic, a set of visual cues for remembering the Dreamtime stories." (175)

Moving them from their land then is cultural genocide!

Sanctuary

Created for the descendants of Jacob at Beth El

What is a sanctuary? What does the term mean?

Specific place to worship God, intentionally created—humanity is shaped by place and time

Sanctuaries provide: order, discipline, and focus to worship God

Tangible aspect to worship

Assurance of God's presence—but does not exclude God being present in the world!

Jacob counts on God being present with him at Beth-El and also on his journey

Story of the rabbi's son in Sacred Necessities (Terry Hershey, 53)

Rabbi's young son would go into the woods every day after school, almost 30 minutes every day, rabbi concerned—is my son up to some trouble?

"Papa, don't worry. I go to the woodland every day. It is my special place, because there I can talk to God." Father—"But you should know that God is the same everywhere."

Son—"Yes, I know that God is the same everywhere, but I am not."

The woods were his sanctuary, was in the world but still a sacred space to focus on the worship of God and to feel the presence of God

Mary Oliver—her sanctuary is in and around Provincetown, MA

"How I Go to the Woods"—"If you have ever gone to the woods with me, I must love you very much." Oliver shares her sanctuary with those she loves.

Sharing our Sanctuaries

What if Jacob didn't do anything about his dream? No pillar? No future holy site?

When we find meaning, we have to pass it along to others.

Share our favorite places, our holy sites, our church life even!

"If you have ever gone to the woods [the park, the beach, church] with me, I must love you very much."