

Scripture Reading: Genesis 46

25 “Then [Joseph’s brothers] went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. 26 And they told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them. 27 But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. 28 Then Israel said, “It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.” 46:1 “So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.” 3 So He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4 I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.” 5 Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. 7 His sons & his sons’ sons, his daughters and his sons’ daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.”

‘Be Not Fearful’

We are learning some important lessons as we study the climax of the story of Jacob and his family journeying to Egypt just as God had promised his grandfather Abraham they would do many years before.

- **These are important lessons that can be clearly seen in the New Testament as priorities for when the Kingdom of Jesus fills the whole earth: And as we learned in the Book of Acts... That is now!**
- **Last week we learned that we are not to be troubled by our failures as we play our roles in God’s story!**

Or as the Apostle Paul reminded the Saints at Philippi: “6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

- **This week, we will learn that we must not be afraid as we look at the incredible challenges God puts in our paths.**
- **And finally, next week we will consider the implications of the Great Commission and how our family history given here in the Book of Beginnings helps us to better understand what God is doing in history today!**

We see in our text that the final act of Jacob as he prepares to leave Canaan, it to offer a sacrifice to God:

Genesis 46:1 “So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.”

Now there are a couple of ways to look at such passages, one helpful and the other not...

What is not helpful is to think of such things as ancient practices by those in the Old Testament in contrast with the living faith that we have in the New Testament!

- **An attitude that says, they killed animals, but we have Jesus and now do not care about those sacrifices!**

This violates the admonition by Jesus that we are to see Him in the Old Testament! And sadly, if we miss Him in the Old Testament we are likely to miss Him in the New Covenant as well as the religious leaders of His day often did. We have often considered those instructions given to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, but Jesus also warned those religious leaders about the danger of missing Him in the very portion of God’s Word we are studying...

As Jesus debated them in John 5: “37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.... 45 Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Yes, those leaders had failed to see that all of these sacrifices, examples and instructions in the Old Testament were teaching them about Jesus...

- **But ignoring those same things today is also a problem.**
- **So, do we start bringing our sacrifices every Sunday and set up an altar with a BIG fire?**

No, we do not, because the Book of Hebrews clearly tells us that Jesus was the better sacrifice and now we have no need of daily sacrifices that pointed to that very work of Jesus... Whenever we see an Old Testament Saint faithfully bringing a sacrifice to God it should remind us of the various New Testament passages that relate to us:

I Peter 2: “4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 13: “15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

- **This is why we spend a good deal of time and effort on our worship music here at Church of the King!**

Philippians 4: “18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

- **We believe that our various domestic offerings to Living Well or the Union Gospel mission are “a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.**

Ephesians 5: “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

- **We are to ‘walk in love, as Christ also loved us & just as He gave His life as the great sacrifice to atone for our sins, our lives are to be lived sacrificially as well:**

Romans 12: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

- And as we live such sacrificial lives, God will speak to us as He did with Jacob and it will often include an admonition to not be afraid which is our lesson for today.

Genesis 46:2 “Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.” **3** So He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. **4** I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; & Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

Now I just said that God will speak to us as He did to Jacob, so does this mean that I should listen for a “John, John” and ask God what He wants? No, because just as the coming of Jesus brought an end to the animal sacrifices and need for an earthly Temple, so the Coming of Jesus as the Word of God has brought an end to continuing revelation... The Canon is complete and when God speaks today, it is through His Word! We study and meditate on the Bible as individuals and collectively to know the will of God for our lives. We hear sermons and are to be good Bereans, taking whatever someone teaches, even if that someone was the Apostle Paul, back to the Scriptures to see if what is taught is true.

And why do we trust the Scriptures? Because as Jesus taught us, they speak of Him...

- ALL of them speak of Him!

And all of them speak to us as the Apostle Paul reminded young Timothy:

II Timothy 3: “**14** But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, **15** and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

And so this brings us to the central lesson for this morning:

- God is sending Jacob off on a long-term mission & He tells him to fear not & trust that God will keep His promises...

Now these promises go back to the night that God made His covenant with Abraham which we studied at length in Genesis 15:

Genesis 15: “After these things the word of Jehovah came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

- God is renewing His promise to make Abraham a great nation & just as He does with Jacob years later, He begins by telling him to not be afraid...
- And God was about to show him some incredible things!

5 “Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” **6** And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

- Abram asks for confirmation and God arranges a sacrifice just as we see with Jacob and then gives him details that would certainly have caused some fear and trembling with Abraham and later with Isaac and now Jacob as they learned about these promises from Abraham.

13 “Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. **14** And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

- God works His plan out on His timetable, but as we always see He does use His Saints as the means of accomplishing His righteous ends.

So as God gives these incredible promises to both Abraham and Jacob He tells them not to be afraid saying fear not and this is what I want to focus on this morning because when we consider the implications of the Great Commission next week I trust we will find a great cause for wonder & fear!

So first we need to consider that word fear...

- **Fear or fearful are used over 450 times in the Scriptures and you can add another 200+ for afraid.**

So, children, what does it mean to fear or to be afraid?

So, if God is telling both Abraham and Jacob to not be afraid does that mean that fear or being afraid is always bad?

- **Considering words like fear is a great reminder about the importance of context when we are studying God's Word.**

In the dictionary, we would find at least two different definitions, and they can be quite different as shown by the synonyms suggested: First fear is said to be "a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined; the feeling or condition of being afraid."

For this they provide these Synonyms: foreboding, apprehension, consternation, dismay, dread, terror, fright, panic, horror, trepidation, qualm.

- **These are what God was clearly telling Abraham and Jacob to avoid!**

But we must remember that there is another definition where fear is said to be "reverential awe, especially toward God: the fear of God." Synonyms given here are: awe, respect, reverence, veneration.

It is also important to remember that both can be used rightly and wrongly: There are certainly some things that we should properly fear or be afraid of: Children should be taught to not play in the street or freeways. Not by experience, but by instruction. On the other hand we teach our children to not be afraid of the dark or fear to make new friends.

- **With the other definition, I think we all agree that we should have a proper fear or reverence for God.**

However, we need also remember that the First Table of the Law makes it pretty clear that we are NOT to show the same reverence for other things such as idols, family or even our time.

- **Now the major point to learn here so we are ready for our lesson on the Great Commission is that IF we have the proper fear of God then we do not need to fear anything that God may put in our path.**

Using some of those synonyms to make that statement more clear we could say, The major point we must learn to be ready for our lesson on the Great Commission is that IF we have the proper reverence for God then we do not need to dread anything that God may put in our path.

Jacob is starting out on a journey that certainly could cause him to fear, a journey that could be foreboding, cause him to have apprehension or consternation, a journey he could dread, with many qualms and much trepidation.

- **That is not an unreasonable assessment from a human standpoint which is why God appears to him and says fear not!**

We can see other examples of this at many points in the Scriptures: Many years later as the mighty nation that God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob prepares to enter the promised land we read this at Deuteronomy 31: "3 Jehovah your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them.

Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as Jehovah has said. 4 And Jehovah will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. 5 Jehovah will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for Jehovah your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”

We see this general principle lined out for us in Psalm 27:1

“Jehovah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

And we see both principles brought together as Jesus reminds His disciples about proper priorities in Luke 12: “4 “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”

Now I hope you can see that what we learned about being troubled last week and fear this week are closely related:

If we are the sort of person who is troubled by many things, we will certainly have many things and circumstances that we are afraid of and need to hear those comforting words, “be not troubled along the way AND fear not to go!

Of course, the applications are legion, so as I give just a few examples we need to trust the Holy Spirit to bring to mind those places where we each need to apply these truths in our individual lives and families.

When we speak about making the Lord’s Day a priority, many are troubled by their lack of time already and fear that all the “important” stuff will not get done if we truly rest one day in seven.

Of course, we see the same reaction when folks are reminded that we should give our first fruits to God.

With most of our budgets it is not humanly possible to give the 1st tenth to God...

- We would have trouble making ends meet and fear we could run out of food or at least our entertainment budget!

Think about all the anxiety and fear we hear in many quarters today when it comes to having children...

Who has the time or money for that!

Even something like being honest at work can fall into this category...

- If I speak up for what is right I fear that I could lose my job and that would cause no end of troubles!

If I take one of my children out on the front lines of the abortion battle or too a soup kitchen to help feed the poor, they might hear a bad word or two and who knows what other bad influences they might be exposed to!

- I am afraid of what trouble such things could bring in the future...
- Just like the ten spies who feared to go and conquer the land of Canaan!

I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea...

Understanding these principles prepares us to fully consider the challenge we have today with the Great Commission where God also promises to make us a great nation and give us the best of the land.

So as our text moves forward we see Jacob obeying God’s commands without fear or trembling, and then we are given a list of all those who went with him which I will commend to your study this week, remembering that all such details are important to our God.

5 “Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. 7 His sons & his sons’ sons, his daughters and his sons’ daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.”

Thus, Jacob and his family are taking an amazing journey and they have been told to not be troubled along the way nor to fear going where God was taking them.

➤ **There God has promised through Pharaoh and Joseph to have them live in the best of the land!**

Not being anxious nor fearful today is important for us because we too are on a journey that will take us to the best of land and that is where our Book of Beginnings will take us next week.

Communion Meditation: John 16

“16 “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

3 And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. 4 But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.