

***PRAISE INTERNATIONAL***  
***STONE PILLOWS IN NOD***  
***GENESIS 28:10-17***

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Good Morning

Prayer Needs

Stone Pillows in NOD. The background to our text begins in Genesis 4 when man is driven out of the garden – and in verse 16 Adams son Cain settles in the land of NOD east of Eden – NOD means wandering – it is descriptive of man apart from Eden apart from God , aimless fugitives. Here in Genesis 28:10-17 we see a wanderer many generations later Jacob, between a rock and hard place.

**Have you ever had to settle for a stone pillow?**

Have you ever been so exhausted from the press of life that has left you beyond unaware of your emotional and physical surroundings that nothing seems like home?

We sat down on a later July afternoon in my brothers house on Union drive in Colorado Springs we had just sold our home and were preparing to move from the only city we had known to look at starting a farming operation with our father - My Dad began to explain why my Mom was in hospital. Somewhere between bites of stew he said she had just had radical surgery for breast cancer and was given about a year to live possibly up to 2 years. I was 12 at the time and I couldn't eat anything else after the shock of the news hit my sisters and my brother we just sat stunned. I remember taking a walk with my sister Monica after the dishes were done and how it seemed as if life was standing still - we just walked stunned - and we wandered together. What was clear was that this was not 'good'.

When God created the Garden He called TOV- Good.

Man literally settles in the place that describes his life apart from the Good place called the TOV. NOD - the place of wandering wondering. I have had many times in my life that have left me in that same place stunned and in a sense wandering wondering. Truth be told we have all had stone pillows - inconsolable places of confusion and challenge in our life...more tragic is the story that we secularism and religion have taught us – God is not in the land of NOD.

Yet in our text - Jacob awakes from his stone pillow with this proclamation - *this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.* Which is to reveal that Jacob went to sleep in the land of NOD and encounters the House of God! He goes to sleep confident he is in the land of wandering - one thing was sure God was not there!

- He awakens to proclaim this is the house of God and the gate of heaven – it is NOT the land of NOD – God who is good has meet me here and I did not know it.

Man may have moved east of Eden in the land of NOD but that did not limit or stop Gods ability to meet mankind.

- ***“we may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always hard to penetrate. The real labour is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake”***  
CS Lewis

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***And the secret is simply this Christ in you!***  
***Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.***  
***Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

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The Good News we are proclaiming today is simple yet true - Stone Pillows are real but the Gospel of Christ proclaims Bethel;

- **The Gospel we proclaim is that God's presence is NOT something we attain or achieve but a reality that He has once again restored to man.**
- **Beloved the Good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that He is God with us right now!**

The Story that secularism and hence religion has told all of us...is simple – God's not here!

- The worst part of my 12 year old story was that in my head and heart this was the Story I believed that we needed to figure out 'how' to get God to be near and get us 'out' of NOD.
- The Story that Jesus comes to confront is that 'God has left you on your own'. The Story that Jesus comes to inhabit, announce and forever restore man into is **God with us!**
- The Reality that Jesus proclaims is that God is present and at work - John 5:17 - in response to healing on the sabbath Jesus said this

*"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."*

**God is present and at work - seems like a basic reality...and yet we often live unaware - especially when our bodies are overcome by fear, discouragement and insecurity....will I have enough...am I enough...do I matter..**

Interesting that one of the most powerful apostolic prayers of the New Testament Paul prays for the Church - Ephesians 1:15-21 **Paul prays that the eyes of the heart would be made aware....**

- **Not to perceive a New Reality**
- **But to perceive what is actually reality!**

**Our invitation this morning is the same that we would embrace what is real....Stone Pillows are hard difficult and sometimes impossible to discern but they do not limit God's presence!**

Jesus final words to His friends....

- John 14:18 *I will not leave you as Orphans I will come to you*
- Matt 18:20 - *...I am with you always even to the end of the age.*

Word *with* - *Meta*. Two things;

- **First** it shows up in our scientific words to describe what happens when there is a change....caterpillar becomes...metamorphosis changes - **always going to be different.**
- **Second** is that it **keeps company.**
- Watch this....Jesus proclaims a **forever change - I am going to keep company with you! I am with you!**
- **So watch this - In Jesus God dwells with us in a human body, but now Christ is with us by His Spirit in the Church you and me!**

**Often say...well yes I agree**

- But we use language in prayer and with one another that describes a God who 'shows up'.
- We express words in song, prayer and testimony about God's absence....desert...
  - Let me acknowledge it often feels that way...but feelings are not great leaders....they are good windows to the soul...but they are not great at discerning what is true.

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The problem that all of us face is that religious secularism has convinced us that God is not present...

- **So we often live unaware of how safe we are.**
- **How close we are to God.**
- **How treasured we are as His children.**

Genesis 28:16-17 Jacobs dream revealed something - *wait this is not just a Rock...*

- *'surely the Lord was in this place and I did not know, ... How awesome is this place! **This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.***
- He names what was a nameless - mundane **place to Bethel – the house of God.**
- Naming was about revealing the true nature of something - God was here and I was unaware!

**Here is the point -**

- **God didn't 'show up' - Jacob 'woke up'**
- **Where was God before Jacob went to sleep?**

And how often have we heard statements about inviting God to 'show up'.

- **Maybe our biggest need is to 'wake up' to the God who said**
- ***I am with you to the end of the age!***
- *So it is in Him we live and move and have our being Acts 17.....*
- **So my mundane just became as important as my extraordinary? **Yes!****

**You see I think all of us struggle with this reality....**

- **Especially when our bodies begin to feel so sure I am not safe...I am not cared for - I am alone....its nothing but a stone pillow in NOD a wandering place...**
- **Wait this isn't just a Stone pillow....this is Bethel....**
- **Jesus would you reveal where I am blind to 'God with me'.**

Nod...is what it feels like but You are revealing TOV...so in our head and heart I allow a repentance towards what is true...

- I am not trying to talk God into coming close....He is already present.
- I am not trying to talk God into being good - He is and always will be good
- I am not trying to talk God into doing something - He is always at work....

**My job? Pay attention to God and what He is doing and give ourselves to it!**

**One of our biggest challenges is that we have all drank the coffee of religious secularism that has told us....He is out there and away from us....**

The invitation is simple

- This is the mystery of our confession - Christ is here – Christ in me...the hope of glory.
- The Power of God is available to you!

This is what Christian Practices of Corporate confession, communion and worship are all about...

This is where Personal Prayer has been so transformative for me – nothing has been more transformative for my heart – I am hoping to either lead or invite others to be a part of a Prayer School soon.

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- Not to get a hold of God and get Him to show up
- But to surrender to the God who is Present – So I am not striving to be 'like Christ' – I am surrendering to Christ in me!
- I am decreasing my resistance to Grace!
- Not so much that we become Holy but rather that we surrender to Holiness in us!

I can begin to proclaim my life in all of its mundane, boring, discouraging, frustrating....etc

- **My life...is Bethel...seriously? Yes!**
- God With us.....
- **What this means is this beloved – the Stone pillows of pain, trauma, hurt....are real**
- **Can become the House of God - The gate of heaven!**
- **Maybe we could stop discarding ordinary mundane moments in our life as 'secular'**
- **Maybe we could stop seeing our suffering as proof of Gods absence.**

Instead in faith proclaim Bethel - *God was here and I did not know it....*

- Recognizing God's presence in the actual ordinary moments of our lives...
- Because that beloved is where He meets us...
- In my fears - He is not afraid, in my shame - not ashamed, in my pain – He is not unaware and in my disconnected and discouraged places - not condemning.

**What if I had the boldness to plant a flag - Bethel in the midst of what is....**

- no He did not make all that mess
- but He is here in the mess and its where meets us.
- What if everything is spiritual?
- What if I am not trying to get God to do something in my life....He is already doing something.
- What if I don't need to be in a better, different, other place to meet God.
- Wherever you are is exactly where God is

The World is upheaval and its true it often feels like we are wandering fugitives – living East of Eden in the land of NOD....

The Gospel proclaims God has invaded the land of NOD to reveal TOV the goodness of a Good God – its called the Kingdom of God.

- He cares too much to allow us to believe the lie that the best fix in the land of NOD is a good marriage, political leader, a good organization - fill in the blank....
- We are all gonna encounter a lot of stone pillows that may even feel convincing that we are nothing more than wandering fugitives....

**True Gospeling is learning to surrender to the mystery of a Good God who came to meet wandering fugitives and restore them to the relationship and representation**

**Eden is not a pin on a map**

**Eden is Christ in you the Hope of glory....so we can see a stone pillow and proclaim...**

**“how awesome is this place...this is nonoe other than the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven”**

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- Where? in the ordinary.... where we unlearn the heresy of religious secularism and live a supernatural life of union with the God who is present....
- **What if we begin to learn how safe, how cared for and how treasured we are in the Love of God? The God is always present and at work!**

Closing Confession -  
Acts 17 the Message

“The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn’t live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him, as if he couldn’t take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don’t make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn’t play hide-and-seek with us. He’s not remote; he’s near. We live and move in him, can’t get away from him! One of your poets said it well: ‘We’re the God-created.’ Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn’t make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it?

“God overlooks it as long as you don’t know any better—but that time is past. The unknown is now known, and he’s calling for a radical life-change. He has set a day when the entire human race will be judged and everything set right. And he has already appointed the judge, confirming him before everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Communion.

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