

Oh Wow! This Is So Awesome – So Awe-Inspiring!

- I. An awe-inspiring place.
- II. An awe-inspiring message.
- III. An awe-inspiring God.

Dear Christian friends,

God does things HIS WAY and **God's ways are often NOT OUR ways**. That can be a HARD LESSON to learn but it shouldn't surprise us. God comes right out and says, ***"My ways are not your ways."***

We can see that in today's readings. Jesus was ***"speaking plainly"*** about HIS CROSS. Peter wanted to HEAR NOTHING of that. Jesus rebuked Peter, ***"You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men."***

In the **epistle reading** Paul said ***"we rejoice confidently in our sufferings"*** and he talked about ***"patient endurance."*** OH REALLY! Is that how you handle life's **hardships** and hassles? Or is grumbling and **complaining** – wallowing in **self-pity** – MORE YOUR STYLE?

Jacob learned here that GOD DOES THINGS **His way** and not always the way JACOB **expected** or **wanted**. ***"Certainly the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it. How awe-inspiring is this place!"***

I like that ***"awe-inspiring"*** better than just ***"awesome."*** **Some things should inspire awe** in us - should wow us - but they don't. The problem is NOT with the **things** but with us. What we see here – OH WOW! This is SO AWESOME – So Awe-INSPIRING! Be wowed by 1)an **awe-inspiring place**, 2)an **awe-inspiring message** and 3)an **awe-inspiring God**.

I. An awe-inspiring place.

This sounds INNOCENT ENOUGH. ***"Jacob set out from Beersheba and traveled toward Haran."*** OFFICIALLY Jacob was heading to his **uncle Laban** to find a godly wife. That was technically the reason for this **500 some mile** trip. But its FIRST PURPOSE to was get Jacob far away from his brother Esau. Jacob was running for his life.

You might recall how Jacob – WITH SOME HELP from his **mother Rebekah** – had tricked his dad Isaac into **giving him the blessing** INSTEAD OF his older twin brother **Esau**. Esau has had enough of Jacob's **tricks** and **conniving**. Esau has made his plans for REVENGE. Once Isaac dies – and we're told Isaac was ***"old and could no longer see"*** so it shouldn't be TOO LONG a wait – once dad was dead Esau planned to kill Jacob. **Mother Rebekah** GOT WIND of Esau's plans so she gets Isaac to SEND JACOB to Haran to find a wife. No doubt Jacob QUICKLY left home.

"He came to a certain place and decided to spend the night there." There was a city there – ***"Luz"*** – soon to be renamed ***"Bethel – house of God."*** For whatever reasons Jacob didn't go into the city. He spent the night OUT IN THE OPEN. No comfortable motel room – just the ground for his bed – a rock for his pillow. It wasn't exactly IDEAL SLEEPING **conditions** but this had to be **perhaps** the BEST NIGHT'S SLEEP Jacob ever had. ***"He had a dream"*** – we'll look at its MEANING in a **few minutes** – and when Jacob woke up he said, ***"Certainly the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it. How awe-inspiring is this place! This is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate to heaven."*** Here Jacob was basically out in the MIDDLE OF NOWHERE – all by himself or so he thought. Yet it was right there UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS that God chose to reveal Himself to Jacob. OH WOW! HOW ***"awesome – awe-inspiring!"***

OH WOW! HOW **“awesome – awe-inspiring!”** Is that what you were thinking as you got ready for church this morning.? Is that what you were FEELING as you **sat down** in your pew? Does that cross WOW you? Does that baptismal font – the **Communion tables** – INSPIRE AWE in you? Sitting at home for your **daily devotion** are you thinking, “This is just so ‘awesome’?” IF NOT – why not? THE PROBLEM is not with church – the cross – the font, etc. **The problem is us!** We EITHER don’t really understand OR we’ve lost our appreciation – for what GOD IS DOING for us **through** His Word and Sacraments. God does things HIS WAY and **His ways may not be** OUR way or our FIRST CHOICE. But through Word and **Sacraments** – through church services – **Bible class** – **daily devotions** GOD HAS CHOSEN to come to us JUST AS He **came to Jacob** in this dream. OH WOW! HOW **“awesome – awe-inspiring!”**

Yes, an **“awesome – awe-inspiring”** place with...

II. An awe-inspiring message.

Put yourself in Jacob’s sandals. You’re alone in the dark on the hard ground WITH YOUR THOUGHTS. You’ve left home under LESS THAN IDEAL **circumstances**. Your brother wants to kill you. You’re heading to a country and **to people** you’ve NEVER SEEN before. Will you ever see your mom or dad ALIVE again? Will it ever be safe for you to **return home**? Everything is SUCH A MESS and you have no one to blame but yourself! RATHER THAN TRUST **God’s promises** and **God’s timing** and **ways** YOU had to take charge and get things moving. FINE MESS you’ve made!

“(Jacob) had a dream in which he saw a stairway set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. There were angels of God ascending and descending on it. There at the top stood the LORD.” The original Hebrew is quite EMPHATIC. ***“Behold – a ladder! Behold – angels! Behold – the LORD.”*** And WOW – what an “awesome – awe-inspiring” message God had for Jacob. ***“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you are lying, I give to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. Now, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back again into this land. Indeed, I will not leave you, until I have done what I have promised to you.”***

God knew what Jacob HAD ALL DONE and He knew exactly what Jacob NEEDED TO HEAR that night. God’s message answered ANY and ALL possible fears and **worries** Jacob may have had. Jacob had made a **real mess** but God was not giving up on him because of it. Jacob may have felt ALL ALONE but God assured him that He would BE WITH Jacob **every step** of the way. Jacob may have felt CUT OFF from His family but God promises that He will bring Jacob back to the Promised Land – that Jacob would have HIS OWN large family. MOST IMPORTANTLY God’s promise of the **coming Savior** still stood and Jacob and **his coming descendants** WOULD PLAY a big role in **God’s plans**. WHAT MORE could Jacob have wanted to hear? HOW could this message not wow him? God’s message assured Jacob of God’s LOVE – God’s forgiveness – God’s CONTINUING presence and **protection** – God’s faithfulness. OH WOW!

It shouldn’t be hard for us to PUT OURSELVES in Jacob’s sandals. We’ve made some PRETTY BIG MESSSES ourselves. **With** our selfishness and **pettiness** – perhaps with our jealousy – **anger** – **bitterness** – we’ve made some real messes in our MARRIAGES or **families** – at work, **school**, etc. Those messes aren’t always SOMEBODY ELSE’S **fault!** **Then there’s our relationship** with God – **oh boy** have we made some real messes here! How often haven’t we **told God** we’re SORRY for whatever – asked Him to forgive us – promised Him we’d **never do** it again – and years later we’re STILL STRUGGLING with that **particular** sin. The MESS GETS BIGGER when we understand that BEHIND EVERY sin **whatever** it may be is the attitude of, “God, I DON’T CARE what You have to say – NOT THIS TIME, God!” To think God hears that from us EVERY single day!

Being honest about **our sin** and what we really DESERVE TO HEAR from God – OH WOW! – what a message God has for us! Go back to that gospel reading – Jesus **“speaking plainly”** about His cross AND His **Easter morning** victory. Go back to what Paul wrote in the epistle reading. **“While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

How can the cross – the font – the Supper – ever be HO-HUM to us? We have God’s own Son as our Savior. Jesus sacrificed His own life on the cross – He shed His blood and gave His body into death ALL **“for the forgiveness”** of all our sins. Jesus washes us clean of all our sins with His precious blood – He credits and clothes us with **His own life** of perfect love and obedience – He reconciles us to God and make us God’s dear children. TRUSTING in Jesus we have peace with God – we’re going straight to heaven when we die. There is nothing more fantastic that the GOSPEL’S MESSAGE of **“peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Yet God has STILL MORE for us. Add His promises to **“be with us always”** – to hear and answer all our prayers – to **“work all things”** for our eternal good. TOP that all off with His promise of “the RESURRECTION of the body and the life everlasting” in the **“new heaven and new earth.”** Boring? HEARD it all before? NO NEVER! OH WOW! HOW **“awesome – awe-inspiring!”**

Yes, it is and **“awesome – awe-inspiring”** message FROM...

III. An awe-inspiring God.

“Certainly the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it. How awe-inspiring is this place! This is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate to heaven.”

It’s true that God is EVERYWHERE – even in an **ice shanty** – on the **golf course** – when we’re tucked in a **nice warm bed** on a cold Sunday morning. It’s also true that God is present IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY in His Word and Sacraments. Through those **means of grace** God comes to us to forgive our sins – strengthen our faith – cheer our hearts – comfort our **sorrows** – ease our **burdens** and cares.

Jacob’s dream shows us NOT JACOB CLIMBING up to God but God reaching down to Jacob. It pictures and reminds us of God WATCHING over us – God personally interested in EACH ONE of us **individually** – God using His angels to **watch over** and **take care** of us. Many see this **“ladder – stairway”** as PICTURING JESUS because we have all those blessings ONLY THROUGH Jesus. Jesus is **“the Way”** to the Father and eternal life in heaven.

Jacob needed TO SEE this – so do we. God may do things HIS WAY and **in ways** we don’t always understand or **appreciate** – but OH, WOW! What an **“awesome – awe-inspiring”** God He is! Amen.

Hymn #464