

I AM WITH YOU

Gen 28

STORY: THE TWINS PART 3

Duncan caught the first flight to Perth, Western Australia. It was going to take over 24 hours. That included a stopover in Hong Kong. Duncan was confused and unhappy about how things had turned out. What had he been thinking of when he agreed to trick his father into making a codicil to his will leaving the house to him? He wished he hadn't done it. But he had never been able to stand up to his mother. It was all her idea. His brother Ian would never forget the deceitful way he had been treated. First with the antique car, and now with the house. What did he want with the family house anyway? Duncan had had a good job and could have bought a house of his own if he had wanted to. That would have been the sensible thing to do. But instead he had been driven by envy. And as a result of his deception he had had to leave home in disgrace, taking only what he could fit in his suitcase.

Duncan felt very lonely. It seemed like he didn't have a friend in the world. He had never been outside Scotland before. But now he was going to Australia to the home of an uncle he had never met, not knowing what awaited him there. He felt alone and scared.

JACOB

That was how Jacob must have felt as he set out from his family home to an uncle who lived 400 miles away.

Jacob had never been away from home before. He didn't even go out hunting like his brother Esau did. He had tricked his father and stolen his father's blessing from his older brother Esau. He hoped this would bring him power and wealth and happiness. But when Esau found out what he had done he threatened to kill Jacob. And so Jacob had to hurry away from home in disgrace and fear, taking only what he could carry with him.

It seemed as if he had nothing to live for. But God was at work for good in his life. Jacob needed to get away from the hurly burly of his family life so that God could show him what he was doing and what he would do.

And so there in the wilderness Jacob had a dream. He dreamt that he saw a stairway reaching from earth to heaven, with angels going up and coming down on it. (Gen 28:12) And there was the Lord standing beside him, speaking to him.

I HAVE BEEN WITH YOU

The Lord reminded Jacob that he was the God of his forebears (v.13)

The Lord had been watching over his family since before he was born.

He had been leading them and caring for them all throughout the generations.

APPN There may be times in our lives when we feel alone – nobody understands what we are going through or how we feel.

There may be times when we feel scared – what does the future hold for us?

It is good to remember that The Lord has been watching over us even before we were born. We can look back through our own lives and remember how the Lord has led us and cared for us, especially when life was difficult.

I AM WITH YOU NOW

Jacob knew that his grandparents Abraham and Sarah and his parents Isaac and Rebecca believed in the Lord. He had grown up with that knowledge. But it had never meant anything to him personally. He had lived in the security of his family home. He had all he needed. He had never felt any need for God.

But now alone in the wilderness, he was no longer so sure of himself. He felt ashamed of the way he had deceived his brother and his father. He could not imagine that the Lord would want anything to do with him. And yet here was the Lord saying he had not written him off. The Lord was with him, despite all that had happened. The Lord wanted Jacob to know him personally, not just as the God of his forebears.

APPN There may be times when we feel we are not worthy of the Lord's love and care. We may think or say or do things and afterwards wish that we had done things differently. There may be things in our lives that we would not want anyone to know about. But God knows all about us. He never gives up on us. And he never turns away anyone who comes to him.

He wants us to know him for ourselves, to know him personally, not just as the God of our forebears

I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

The Lord promised to stay with Jacob, not only throughout the long journey but throughout his life. The Lord promised to work for good in Jacob's life and eventually to bring Jacob back to the land he had promised him.

APPN Jesus also promised his followers, "I will be with you always" (Matt 28:20). That is a promise for us also. If we put out trust in Jesus then no matter what the future holds the Lord will always be with us.

He will be with us throughout our lives, working for good and eventually we will be with him for ever.

Jacob found this hard to believe.

"If you will be with me ... then you will be my God" (v.20)

It seems a very hesitant faith. And yet it was the beginning of a personal relationship with the Lord.

Life did not suddenly become easy – his uncle Laban tricked him into marrying Leah as well as Rachel and tried to do him out of his wages.

But the Lord was with Jacob throughout it all and the relationship that started in the wilderness at Bethel grew and matured over the years so that Jacob, the deceiver eventually became Israel, he who struggled for God's blessing and won. (Gen 32:28)

STORY: THE TWINS (CONT)

The plane touched down at Hong Kong airport. The passengers were told they could get a visa and see a bit of Hong Kong. Duncan decided to do that because he needed something to take his mind off the things that had happened. On the bus into the centre of the city he sat next to an older man called Pete and they got talking. He was easy to speak to and Duncan found himself telling Pete all about his troubles. They found a nice restaurant and sat at a table where they continued their conversation while enjoying their meal.

It turned out Pete had faced similar difficulties when he first went to Australia, 20 years ago. His family had not understood his reasons for leaving. They said he was being selfish, and that they needed him nearby because he was their only son. He had spent years feeling guilty.

His wife started going to church. She knew Pete was unhappy and felt that maybe if he could find faith in God then he might be able to come to terms with his guilt about leaving his parents. She encouraged him to come along to church day when they had a special service and just to keep the peace he agreed. Pete told Duncan that his life had changed from that night onwards, not in any sudden way, but things just gradually worked themselves out. He had put his faith in God, started to read the Bible and follow its teachings. He said that one passage in particular had spoken to him. He thought that it might help Duncan so he pulled out a small new testament from his backpack and looked up the reading.

Ep 1:17 "I ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him personally."

After their meal they walked around Hong Kong marvelling at the crowds of people everywhere. Then it was time for them to catch the Airport Express back in time for their onward flight to Perth.

Duncan's uncle was waiting to meet him at the airport. They drove into the outback and eventually after more than 4 hours on the road reached a tiny town that looked like the last place on earth. A few miles further took them to the sheep ranch and his uncle Jim's family home. Duncan was given a small spare room and after the evening meal was over he was told that he would be expected to lend a hand on the ranch from first light in the morning. Duncan was tired but he couldn't sleep. He kept thinking about what Pete had said. He stood outside the farmhouse and stared up at the night sky. He had never seen a sky so dark and full of stars. It brought back those moments from childhood where he had tried to think about why everything was created in the first place. Why was he here? What was it all about? Surely there must be a God behind it all and he knew he wanted to get to know this God for himself. And so for the first time in his life he prayed

Ep 1:17-19

“I ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him personally. I ask that your minds will be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.”

The Lord wants us to know him personally

His promises to Jacob are his promises to us

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I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS