

Sermon 14 June 2020

Theme: Discovering the Power of God in your Rock-bottom moment

Good morning brothers and sisters. Let's listen to today's scripture readings.

Genesis 28:10-16 (NIV)

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it^[a] stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV)
The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Let us bow our heads in prayer: Heavenly Father as we reflect on your word this morning we also reflect on our lives and where we find ourselves in our journey with You and our fellow brothers and sisters. Father it is indeed under difficult and challenging circumstances that we meet today. Help us Lord to keep our eyes fixed on You, even during this lockdown and pandemic. We pray for everyone affected and infected by this pandemic. Father may now the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, our Rock and our salvation. Amen.

There are two powerful emotions that motivate us to make dramatic changes in our lives: inspiration and desperation. It is often the case that we find our greatest inspiration in the most desperate of situations. When you and I hit rock bottom and we reach our lowest point in our lives, we sometimes make decisions that are life changing. It is in these situations that we realize that we must make some changes to how we normally do things. The word of God is full of examples of men and women who hit rock bottom: David in 2 Samuel 11-12:23; The Sinful Woman in Luke 7:36-50; and The Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-24 to mention just a few. In all these situations these men and women discover and experience God's power in their situation. It is when we find ourselves at our lowest, that God is closest to us. And it is here that we can discover and experience God's power at work. There is no other place in life that is as certain as that place where we hit rock bottom. Everybody goes there no matter our socio-economic position or our religious experience. Like Jacob we might find ourselves in that place as a result of the poor decisions we made, or we might find ourselves there at no fault of our own. We currently find ourselves in lockdown faced with this deadly pandemic. Something we are not responsible for, but we must face the consequences that comes with it. Many find themselves at rock bottom because of a lost job, a loss of income, the loss of a loved one, insecurity of what the future holds, etc. We may find ourselves at a place that can't get any worse, where life no longer

makes sense, a place where you can't get lower, a place where it seems that there's nothing you and I can do, a place where it feels like life is closing in on us and that all our problems just converge into that single moment. Jacob here, hits rock bottom: in his family life, his emotions, his faith and his future. He lost everything precious to him, it was so bad, that his only prized possession was a pile of rocks. Many of us have felt the pain of this moment we find ourselves in, but very few have felt the power of this moment. But there is hope, with God's help Jacob turned his "Rock Bottom" experience into a rock-solid encounter. In the words of Michelle Parsons: "Hitting Rock Bottom doesn't mean you have to stay there." It is when we discover the power of God in our rock bottom moment, like Jacob did, that we are able to turn this moment, our pile of rocks, into a pillow and into an altar for God's glory. It is when we discover God's power that we realize that we must take inventory of what we have left instead of taking stock of what we have lost. We then realize that God wants to use what we have left. When we discover God's power, we start to realize that He has never left us, that He has always been with us and this will never change. Verse 16 declares: "When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'" Can we feel God's presence, even amid the lockdown and pandemic, even when we've lost so much? Can we, this morning say like Jacob did: "Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it."

Have we lost hope? Are we blinded by our current circumstances? Can we this morning turn our rock bottom experience into a rock-solid encounter with God's power and presence? God wants to know from you and I this morning what we have left, because He wants to use what we have left.

Finding ourselves in the 12th week of lockdown, what do we focus on? Do we focus on the positive things or do we focus on the negatives? It is so easy to lose our way during this time. The desert is a desolate place, but it can also be a beautiful place, it just depends on whether we are looking at it from a positive or a negative point of view. We find both vulture and hummingbird in the desert, the one is looking for rotten remains while the other is looking for any sign of sweetness. What is it that you and I are looking for during this lockdown? Are we looking for the rotten remains, all the negatives, or are we looking for a sign of sweetness, all the positives? It is important how we look at our situation because this can assist us to deal with our rock bottom moment. Jacob used the rock to build a bed, God built a ladder, Jacob then built an altar and God built a man of God. J.K Rowling says that Rock Bottom became the solid foundation on which he rebuilt his life. When we reach our lowest, when we hit Rock Bottom, it's not the end because the only direction we can go when we at our lowest, is upwards.

There are a few lessons we can learn from hitting rock bottom. I want to mention five this morning:

1. **Different people have different rock bottoms.** Although we are all experiencing the same situation currently, the pandemic and lockdown, we experience different challenges, some of us lost something or someone others had to face being infected.
2. **Rock bottom is a place to rebuild, Jacob used his rock bottom and builds an altar.**
3. **Finding God at rock bottom does not remove the consequences of our decisions or the effects of this pandemic and lockdown.** It just means that a new journey starts here, knowing that God is in our corner to help us through whatever we are facing.
4. **We must never forget our rock bottom moments.** We can use our rock bottom moments to strengthen, encourage and teach others how to deal / cope with and avoid the pain and hurt when they hit rock bottom and that they can lift their eyes to the hills, because our help comes from the Lord.
5. **Lastly, when you and I hit rock bottom, we must wake up.** It is so easy to stay down when we hit rock bottom. It is so easy to lose hope and give up. It does not matter how many times you and I have hit rock bottom or how many times God has pulled us through, the question have we awoken to a new us, a new day, a new vision for tomorrow, a new hope? Jacob would have never

been able to handle what was lying ahead of him if God did not put a new spirit in him, if he did not wake up with a new vision. God put more fight in Jacob to stand against the battles ahead. How much fight is left in you and me this morning amidst this virus and lockdown? Have we woken up to a new spirit or are we still asleep? When we enter this world after this service this morning, will we be able to stand against the battles and challenges we face, that this pandemic and lockdown throws at us daily? God wants to put a new spirit in you this morning, God wants to restore your fighting spirit. Will you and I allow Him to restore us this morning?

Matthew 11:28, Listen to this invitation from God this morning: "Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

When David hits rock bottom he declares in ***Psalm 61:2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."***

In conclusion: When Jacob hit rock bottom, he discovered God's power. It was in his rock bottom moment that he realized that God can change his rock into a pillow, that God can change his hopeless situation into a glorious moment. We must never underestimate the power of God. When Jacob thought that the world has turned their back on him and that he had nowhere to go, God revealed to him His power to change, not only his current situation, but also,

he's future. Jacob used the only thing he had left, a pile of rocks, to build an altar for God and to rebuild his life.

What do you and I have left this morning? Maybe we have lost our income, and our situation looks hopeless. God wants to use what you have left this morning.

(Insert the video here please)

Let's pray: Heavenly Father, as we enter the world and must face life again this week, remind us of Your power to change any situation. Help us to restore our trust in you. And no matter what we face, may we say like David said in Psalm 61:2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Be with us Lord now during this week. God bless Africa, bless her children, guide our leaders and rulers and give us peace. Amen