

SERMON TITLE- "The Long And Winding Road"

TEXT- Genesis 28:10-22

PREACHED AT- Neighbourhood Church

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Some years ago when the Coquihalla Highway was first built a promo video was made up that took you on a fast trip over the hwy- essentially doing the entire 3 hour ride in 30 seconds. It was a very effective sales job for a beautiful road.

In many ways that is- first, what the Book of Genesis is. This book takes us on a journey from Creation to the world as we know it. This book, which considering the scale of what it is doing is tiny. It covers story after story moving from a perfect creation to the introduction of sin and all the characters that played a part of both calamity and redemption.

Secondly, as we cover this book we are also doing the same thing and added to that we are roaring from one point to the next at neck-break speed and then slamming on our brakes for a time of reflection, only to roar off again to the next stopping point.

I hope that as we take this journey on Sunday morning, you are also taking time on your own to do the journey through Genesis at a pace that works for you. That means both stopping and checking out the amazing landscape that surrounds us- and also keeping moving.

It has been a while since we were in Genesis, with the Christmas break, and so my first title for today's sermon was, "Back To The Beginning." That's what we are doing- but we are also quickly going to get back on the journey we have been on.

As you go through Genesis, you quickly realize that this is a story with hills, valleys, long straight stretches and sharp corners. What makes the Coquihalla such a great road is that it also covers almost every variety of terrain from rain forests, to high, mountain passes, to arid plains bustling cities. For those who drive it in different seasons you also experience the best and the worst weather.

So far we have seen that in Genesis as well and what makes this such a good study, for me, is that this changability and complexity actually is also a great metaphor for how life really is. There are hills and valleys, moments of joy and discouragement. The

next stretch of road will not be the same as the last one- but one thing is sure- it too will have hills and valleys.

As I reflected on that in the context of last year and also of the year to come I had a couple of thoughts-

1. That speeded up picture of the road is in some ways a better take than any given moment- and for most of us- even the toughest road we travel will have a particular beauty when we look back on it.
2. God is the God of the road. Of course He is there in the moment- but more importantly He is along for the journey- the whole thing from beginning to end.

With that we turn to a story that finds its main character on the road. His name is Jacob.

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 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. Genesis 28:10-11

Who is Jacob and why is he on the road? In the sweeping Genesis story Jacob is the son of the son of Abraham- his grandson.

Abraham's son Isaac whom Abraham had been asked to put on the altar- had grown up and raised his own family. Isaac had 2 sons, twins in fact. But these twins did not get along- they were oil and water. Their names were Jacob and Esau and from the earliest times there was tension between them

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. There above it 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. Genesis 28:12-13

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. 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." Genesis 28:14-15

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, [f] though the city used to be called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD [g] will be my God 22 and [h] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." Genesis 28:10-22