

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 23, 2017



THE LESSON Genesis 28:10-19a

¹⁰Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹He reached a certain place and spent the night there. When the sun had set, he took one of the stones at that place and put it near his head. Then he lay down there. ¹²He dreamed and saw a raised staircase, its foundation on earth and its top touching the sky, and God's messengers were ascending and descending on it. ¹³Suddenly the LORD was standing on it and saying, "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. ¹⁴Your descendants will become like the dust of the earth; you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. Every family of earth will

be blessed because of you and your descendants. ¹⁵I am with you now, I will protect you everywhere you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done everything that I have promised you."

¹⁶When Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought to himself, The LORD is definitely in this place, but I didn't know it. ¹⁷He was terrified and thought, This sacred place is awesome. It's none other than God's house and the entrance to heaven. ¹⁸After Jacob got up early in the morning, he took the stone that he had put near his head, set it up as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. ^{19a}He named that sacred place Bethel.

THE RESPONSE Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

¹LORD, you have examined me. You know me. ²You know when I sit down and when I stand up. Even from far away, you comprehend my plans.

³**You study my traveling and resting. You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.**

⁴There isn't a word on my tongue, LORD, that you don't already know completely.

⁵**You surround me—front and back. You put your hand on me.**

⁶That kind of knowledge is too much for me; it's so high above me that I can't fathom it.

⁷**Where could I go to get away from your spirit? Where could I go to escape your presence?**

⁸If I went up to heaven, you would be there. If I went down to the grave, you would be there too!

⁹If I could fly on the wings of dawn, stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—¹⁰even there your hand would guide me; even there your strong hand would hold me tight!

¹¹If I said, “The darkness will definitely hide me; the light will become night around me,”

¹²even then the darkness isn’t too dark for you! Nighttime would shine bright as day, because darkness is the same as light to you! . . .

²³Examine me, God! Look at my heart! Put me to the test! Know my anxious thoughts!

²⁴Look to see if there is any idolatrous way in me, then lead me on the eternal path!

THE EPISTLE Romans 8:12-25

¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn’t an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. ¹³If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. ¹⁴All who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons and daughters. ¹⁵You didn’t receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God’s children. ¹⁷But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God’s heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

¹⁸I believe that the present suffering

is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God’s sons and daughters. ²⁰Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God’s children. ²²We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. ²³And it’s not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. ²⁴We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see? ²⁵But if we hope for what we don’t see, we wait for it with patience.

THE GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵While people were

sleeping, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷“The servants of the landowner

came and said to him, ‘Master, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?’

²⁸“ ‘An enemy has done this,’ he answered.

“The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

²⁹“But the landowner said, ‘No, because if you gather the weeds, you’ll pull up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvest-time I’ll say to the harvesters, ‘First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.’” . . .

³⁶Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷Jesus replied, “The one who plants the good seed is the Human

One. ³⁸The field is the world. And the good seeds are the followers of the kingdom. But the weeds are the followers of the evil one. ³⁹The enemy who planted them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the present age. The harvesters are the angels. ⁴⁰Just as people gather weeds and burn them in the fire, so it will be at the end of the present age. ⁴¹The Human One will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that cause people to fall away and all people who sin. ⁴²He will throw them into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Those who have ears should hear.”