



# One Page Sermon

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#### #BeGrounded Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23; 28:10-17—Jacob tricks his father and has a dream

I have suffered from motion sickness all my life. I have never been able to read in the car. When an airplane takes off, I have to lean back, close my eyes and relax. I used to love roller coasters, but now going on one makes me feel as if I just had an all-night bender.

According to webmd.com, motion sickness is caused “when there are conflicts among your senses. Say you’re on a ride at the fair, and it’s spinning you around and upside down. Your eyes see one thing, your muscles feel another, and your inner ears sense something else. Your brain can’t take in all those mixed signals. That’s why you end up feeling dizzy and sick” (<https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/ear-infection/motion-sickness>).

Another important concept to consider is the idea of “liminal space.” Liminal comes from a Latin word that means “threshold.” Liminal spaces are transitions. They are places that are in between two things. In architecture, stairways are liminal spaces. In life, a graduation can be considered a liminal space. It is both the end of one time of life and the beginning of another. Over the course of the day, the dawn is a liminal space when the sky starts to turn blue and the birds begin to awake.

Some liminal spaces can be very mundane, like the unease you feel as you step off of an escalator. They can also be very profound, like sunset at a beach (which is a liminal space between ocean and land). Liminal spaces are ripe for meaning, but can also be discomfobulating. Driving in a car is a liminal space, and this can make us sick as the mixed messages can be too much for our brains to sort out.

I believe that right now we are in a motion-sickness inducing liminal space. We have been in it for so long that we are weary. We are weary of making mundane decisions that have life-or-death weight to them. We are weary of the disruptions in our life that were supposed to be temporary. We are in this in-between that is dangerous and anxiety-inducing. Some are reacting violently to this prolonged sense of liminal space. Some are languishing through it. One day we may feel energized and ready to move through it. Another day we feel beaten down. As a society, we have been getting mixed signals for so long, we are experiencing a great collective motion-sickness.

What does all of this have to do with Jacob? In the passage we read today, Jacob is in a liminal space. In the first part he tricks his father into blessing him instead of his older brother. We could spend time analyzing the mechanics of this trick. What was Rebekah’s role? How much was Jacob complicit? Why didn’t Isaac question more? Why can’t he bless both of his sons? These are important questions to ask—but they are questions I will leave for another day.

Instead, we will focus on the plain and simple fact that Jacob

runs from his home out of fear, and is heading toward his uncle’s home, a place of unknown. He is in a liminal space between a dangerous situation and an unknown. Jacob is in a state like so many of us—between a dangerous situation and an unknown.

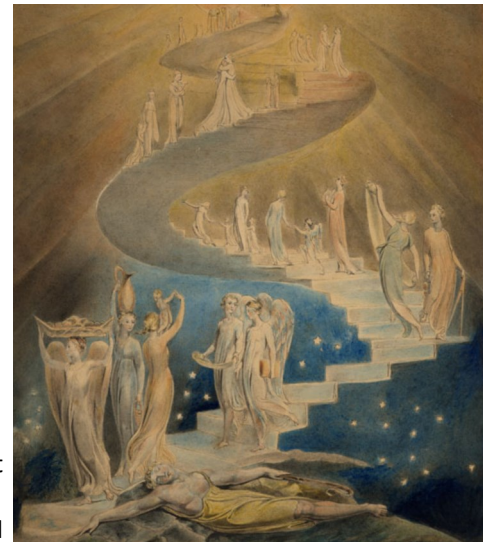
It is in this place that Jacob has a dream. He dreams of a staircase that connects God and earth. He hears the voice of God who promises to him blessing. He realizes—perhaps for the first time in his life, that God is real and with him. It is in this liminal space that he meets God for the first time. When he is done, he realizes he needs to mark the spot. He creates an altar to make sure that forevermore he will know that is the place where he was connected to God.

As a people of God grounded in Scripture, we can take solace in this moment. It is in the liminal space of Jacob’s life that he found his most profound connection to God. Throughout Scripture, it is in the liminal moments where God and God’s people most often meet.

It is in the wilderness that God provided manna. It was in the exile that the Prophets most profoundly heard God’s voice. It was in the valley of the shadow of death that the Psalmist knew that the Lord was the good shepherd. It was in the wilderness that Jesus met John and saw the Holy Spirit. It was on the tumultuous sea that Jesus walked to meet his disciples. It was in the liminality between life and death that Jesus appeared risen to Mary.

It is in this moment of in-between-ness that we may encounter God, too. Here in this place we can anchor ourselves to worship and find God. We can anchor ourselves to the Scripture stories of promise and hope. We can anchor ourselves to the Church that is feeding, reaching, adapting AND holding steady in the tumultuous sea.

Jacob, in the midst of crisis—stuck between danger and unknown—found a grounding moment with God. May we who feel stuck between danger and the unknown find a grounding moment with God in worship, prayer, and Bible study.



Jacob's Ladder, by William Blake (c. 1800)