

*Read also Hebrews 6:13-20. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

When you have a big decision to make, who do you consult? Do you call your parents? Your adult children? Do you talk to friends, or check with your financial advisor? Perhaps you do all of the above.

Where does your faith play in? How do you determine what God wants when a change is called for? How close is your lived reality to your faith?

If you believe Psalm 23 – “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; *for you are with me . . .*”

If you embrace Jesus’ final words, “And remember, *I am with you always*, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20), then you might do what Jacob did.

The eleven brothers had gone back to Israel to tell their father that Joseph was alive and to bring Jacob to Egypt to live. Let’s hear the story. READ Genesis 46:1-7

Beer-sheba was the place of major happenings.

Abraham and Abimelech made an agreement regarding a well he dug. He dug it, and even though he didn’t own the land, he had rights to the well. After completing the deal, Abraham “called on the name of the Lord there.” (Gen 21:31, 33) It was like a stake in the land.

Isaac, his son, dug seven wells at Beer-sheba. During the night, the Lord appeared to him and reiterated His same promise to Abraham would extend to Isaac. Isaac built an altar there.

Jacob had his dream in which he saw a stairway to heaven right after leaving Beersheba, and the Lord stood beside him there and gave him the same promise which he gave Abraham and Isaac. At that time God said, “*Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*”

The promise was that this family would become a great nation and be a blessing to all the families of the earth. When he awoke Jacob said, “This is the gate of heaven!” (Gen 28:10-16)

Imagine having had that dream, and then his son Joseph was lost to him for twenty-two years; then found, then he gets the message that he is to go to live in Egypt. Don’t you know he wondered, *if God is going to give me this land, then should I leave? Am I abandoning the promise?*

Nevertheless, he couldn’t survive the famine in Israel so he went. But you can see why he stopped in Beer-sheba, which was on the south road toward Egypt. And why he built an altar.

It would be just like you coming into this place and praying for God’s guidance.

I know that some who have left this place and moved elsewhere often come back to Duncanville and come to this very building. Remembering that God spoke to them here.

It's not the building, or the altar, though we often identify those things with God. Let's say I go outside and stand by the sign in front of the church one night and look up at the tower, which is lit. And I pray. I feel God's presence and I ask God to guide me; let's pretend that I pray *should I marry Dean?* And I do and it works out! (Yes, I once prayed that, and yes, it did work out!) So the next time I need to pray for something I remember standing at that place, looking up at the tower shining in the spotlight, and think *I need to go pray by that tower. God is there!*

Don't you know as Jacob knelt at that altar that he also relived that first time he was there. He grew up with a father who sought God. He grew up with a grandfather who had left his home to follow God. All of them heard God speak at this place. So he stopped at the same place, Beer-sheba, the place of God.

It's not the place that's important, but the activity of seeking God.

It has nothing to do with the tower; it has to do with God's faithfulness to hear me.

It would be like you growing up in the church, and seeing your parents and maybe even grandparents bow their heads in prayer. Perhaps they had moved across the country to follow a dream that they had prayed about. Perhaps the dream is God's dream for them, and they embraced it.

It's not the place that's important, but embracing the dream God has for you. If you make it the place, the promise, the dream, becomes benign. The offer is to go with Him and walk into the future.

So Jacob, all packed up with his family, thinks back on the stories of Grandpa Abe and Father Isaac who also stopped and prayed; who built altars to the Lord. This family got attached to God, and God got attached to them. God was so attached that God reiterated his dreams, his promise, his faithfulness to each of them.

*I am God, the God of your father and the promise I made to him extends to you.* The promises of God also extend to you, if you live by faith.

So after they prayed and God answered, reassuring them He was with them, they moved on in faith. They accepted the offer to go with him into the future.

It's not really about the place, it's about the GOD. If it was about a particular place and something bad happened, for them it was the famine which was causing them to have to move away. Then, this family would look back—look back—spend all their time looking back, and say *everything went wrong; we can't bear this loss; God's promise has failed; it only works if we stay right here.*

Are you looking back, or are you looking forward? When we think of the light and the tower outside this church, or the wells of Beer-sheba, we can't make an idol of a place. It is really about the journey.

God was saying "GO!" Move forward, I will be with you.

God's promise is an oath. God has bound himself and "it is impossible for God to lie." (Heb 6:18)

God's promises are such a reality that we can live very closely to them. Even if times change, and circumstances do not stay the same, we can rest assured that faith has more to do with "being with" than "being somewhere."

Do you feel okay with that? Sometimes we think, if I have this thing or that job or this particular house in which to live or that person in my life *then* God is with me. *Then* life is good.

But God says, "Do not be afraid, if you have a loss, no matter what, I am your God and I will go with you."

God binds himself to you. This puts us in a very secure place. As the writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us."

Did you catch that? The hope is always before us.

Yesterday we held a Festival of Hope and we told stories of conflict – like Jacob and Esau, and the Prodigal Son, and how to subdue an enemy who comes against us with a meal, and how to move forward after receiving the grace of God. Conflicts and troubles come in life, but God's faithfulness to show us the way through supersedes them all. God's promise always brings hope and a positive future. Do you have that hope this morning?

AMEN