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## *Dream On*

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Pentecost 9 (Proper 11A in the Revised Common Lectionary)**  
**Genesis 28:10-19a**

*Jacob dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth,  
the top of it reaching to heaven;  
and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*  
Genesis 28.12

"We are climbing Jacob's ladder," goes the old song. But that's not always the song I remember when I hear this lovely story of Jacob. I remember a song by an old band named Aerosmith. Remember them?

They sang a song called "Dream on." I remember when I first heard that song. I was in Massachusetts, visiting the person I thought was my girlfriend. I thought I was in love. Boy, was I wrong.

As I recall, rather dimly now, she and I drove all over the coast, listening to the radio. In those days, we had no CDs or mix tapes. And the song I heard the most often on that ill-fated visit was "Dream on."

I was dreaming, in those days. I dreamed I might be in love.

But then, things between us grew sour. Well, they didn't really grow sour. In fact, the problem was ""in that adolescent relationship"" the problem was that things didn't really grow at all. That relationship was just empty. We had no arguments, because we really had nothing to talk about. We just didn't grow. Whatever your age in married life, growth is what holds you together; mutual growth is what keeps you interested. We parted friends, as I recall, but we definitely knew we had no spark.

We were not talking together. We were not sharing dreams together. Lovers are people who can dream. People who want to be in love know how to dream together.

Long ago, our ancestor Jacob left his father's house and journeyed toward Haran. We forget, perhaps, when we hear the story today, that he was looking for a wife. Sometimes, in those days, husbands and wives were also lovers, but sometimes they were not. I suppose the same is true in our own time. Sometimes husbands and wives are lovers, and sometimes they are not!

As Jacob journeyed toward Haran, looking for a wife, he lay down to rest in the evening. He put his head down on a rock, and that rock became holy. On that rock, he dreamed. He dreamed that he saw a ladder, with angels ascending and descending upon it, into and out of, the very kingdom of heaven.

"Oh, what a dream!" Do you remember that song? That was not sung by Aerosmith. It was sung by Johnny Cash. (I tend to trust Johnny Cash these days more than I trust Aerosmith.)

Oh, what a dream Jacob had!

It was a dream so vivid, so full of power and spirit, so assuring, so true, that he woke up and exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it!"

What an amazing revelation! I wonder if any of us ever say anything like that anymore. Do we ever look around us and say, "Surely God is in this place"? Do we ever wake up from a dream and say that?

No, we don't. I wonder if some of us even believe in God anymore. I wonder if some of us even look for God anymore. Some of us would rather not dream about God. We'd rather dream about, well, sex and luxury top many of our lists. What is a good dream for most of us? It's pleasure and opulence.

That's not what Jacob dreamed about. Jacob was actually in a rather uncomfortable place. His head was on a rock. I don't know how many of you have ever slept on a rock before. I have, and let me tell you, it's not the most comfortable sleeping position. Jacob was not dreaming about opulence and pleasure. He was not dreaming about sex and luxury.

Jacob was dreaming about communication. It was a ladder he saw, and he saw angels going up and down the ladder. Remember, an angel is a messenger. Jacob saw the messengers of God delivering messages upward, and he saw angels of God delivering messages downward. They were going both ways. They were communicating something.

What in the world could this mean?

It means that God wants to communicate with the earth. God wants to communicate with humanity. And God wants humanity to communicate with him. That place, Bethel, which means "House of God," was where the lines of communication were clear and open. The ladder of communication was strong and sturdy. It was a holy place. Surely the Lord was in that place, in that foreign and unusual place, and Jacob did not immediately realize it.

I wonder how many of us could endure that kind of communication. How many of us want direct and clear communication at all? How many of us would rather avoid the truth with our lovers, with our partners, with our wives, with our husband, with our children.

A lover is someone we grow in communication with. Perhaps that is what Jacob was looking for in a wife. He was looking for someone he could grow with. It was certainly what God was looking for. God was certainly looking for love, the love of humanity.

And Jacob was to be the great guardian of a great promise of God. Through Jacob, and from Jacob's fathers, God had promised to bless all of humanity. Jacob was now the steward of that covenant. He was looking for someone to communicate that covenant with.

When we, in our time, are sleeping clearly and restfully, when we are dreaming healthy dreams, that is when we dream about clear and freeing relationships. We dream about someone we can share growth and promise with. We dream about communication so clear and real, so delightful and assuring, that it is like the kingdom of God himself.

We can wake up after such dreams and say "Dream on." "Oh what a dream!" Surely the Lord is in this place!

Dreams are for people who want to be in love. Dreams are for lovers, for folks who want to grow together.

I pray for sweet dreams tonight. I pray for all of you to have sweet dreams tonight. Dream of the one you want clear and beautiful conversation with. That communication is the strongest kind of intercourse there is.

"We are climbing Jacob's ladder," goes the other song. "Every rung goes higher, higher." Dream of ladders and lines strong enough to carry all that you are and all that you desire.

Dream of that love, and you will have glimpsed the kingdom of heaven itself. You will wake and say, "Surely, the Lord is in this place."

AMEN.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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