

Responding to God



■ READ: A selection from Genesis 28:10-22

And [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. And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 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."

■ REFLECT:

Have you had a dream like that—the kind that feels so vivid that you sit up in bed and start to act on it, as if the events of your dream had really happened? Except in Jacob's case, they had. His dream wasn't just the normal processes of a brain filing away the day's events. His dream was a vision deliberately given to him by God.

In the dream, God reiterated the promise he made to Abraham, Jacob's grandfather: "your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth ... and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring" (Genesis 28:14). God also promised that he would remain with Jacob wherever Jacob went (28:15).

In response, Jacob determined that the Lord—the particular God of his father and grandfather—would be his God. He wouldn't follow some other shoddy god. He also declared that this was to be the Lord's house and that he'd give back to God a tenth of what God gave to him.

This is the pattern of the gospel: God makes a promise to us and commits himself to us, and then we offer to God our allegiance and a portion of what we've been entrusted. During Advent, we anticipate the fullest expression of God's promise to remain with us. At Christmas, Jesus comes as Emmanuel, God-with-us. As we wait for his coming, let's consider where our allegiance lies and whether we're offering back to God what's rightfully his.

■ PRAY:

Lord, what a promise—to remain with us always! Through your Holy Spirit, point out to me the places where my response to your grace is less than adequate. Enable me to give myself fully to you. Amen.