Our Hope In Times of Uncertainty
Genesis 28: 10-22

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set.
   Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching
   to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “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.

14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west
   and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed
   through you and your offspring.

15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to
   this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place and I
   was not aware of it.”

17 He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house
   of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it
   up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this
   journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear

21 so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God

22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give
   me I will give you a tenth.”

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION
These are times of great uncertainty, not only in our country, but around the world.

*With the economies of Greece, Italy, Spain, the United States and a host of other countries on very shaky ground, one can’t help but wonder if we aren’t on the verge of a global economic collapse.

*This year alone we have seen the fall of dictatorships in Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Algeria and Tunisia. One can’t help but wonder what all this unrest in the Arab world is leading up to.

*And here in the U.S. we have a $15 Trillion dollar debt...... high unemployment......and the most ineffective government in America’s history. One gets the sense if we stay on our current path America’s days may be numbered.

For those who have put all their faith and trust in man-made governments or the stock market, these are certainly dismal times. In fact, the future may look hopeless.

But as we are going to see in today’s scripture text, for those of us who are children of God there is always “Hope In Times of Uncertainty.”

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TRANSITION TO SCRIPTURE TEXT
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Jacob was facing a very “uncertain future.”

*He had NO WIFE and NO CHILDREN.

*He didn’t have a JOB.

*He didn’t even have A HOME.

All the things one clings to for security were missing in Jacob’s life.

Besides that, Jacob is just 70 MILES into a 450 journey on foot from Beersheba to Haran.
*There is a possibility his angry brother, ESAU, will try to track him down and get revenge on him for wrongfully taking his family birthright.

*Because the terrain is barren and rugged, there is also a very real danger that Jacob could be attacked by wild animals or bandits.

Jacob sees nothing but “uncertainty” in every direction.

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Well as we come to our text here in GENESIS 28, Jacob is exhausted and decides to “bed down” for the night.

You notice VERSE 11 refers to his campsite as “a certain place.” We learn in VERSE 19 that this place was evidently the ruins of a city called LUZ. Think of this place as a “deserted ghost town.”

But this “barren place” was about to become a very special place, because it was here GOD gave JACOB the HOPE he needed in his time of uncertainty. And as you will see, there are some valuable lessons for you and me as well.

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First of all, I would have you to notice…….

**I. Jacob Had The Assurance of God’s Promises vs. 13-15**

13 There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “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.

14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

1. The very first thing GOD does is remind JACOB of the PROMISES he has made.

GOD is telling JACOB, “I made a promise to your father, Isaac, and
to your grandfather, Abraham, that I was going to give them the very land you are now sleeping on......and that on this land I will multiply your family and through your family, the whole world will be richly blessed.

2. When you remember Jacob had no home, no wife and no children at this point, you can see just how encouraging this PROMISE OF GOD would be to Jacob.

3. Most of our periods of UNCERTAINTY in life are the result of going through CHANGES.

- HEALTH changes
- JOB changes
- FINANCIAL changes
- RELATIONSHIP changes
- FAMILY changes

And during those times of UNCERTAINTY brought on by change, one way we FIND HOPE is by clinging to GOD’S UN-CHANGING PROMISES.

HEBREWS 13:5 “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.”

PSALM 121: 3-8 “He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel, will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—-the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

And of course there’s that wonderful promise in ROMANS 8:28......

ROMANS 8:28 And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.

RECOMMENDATION: (Hold up Personal Promises Book) If you don’t have one of these, you need to get a copy of on Amazon.com or a the Bible bookstore. It is called Personal Promises From God’s Word. This little book is filled with God’s Promises for virtually any situation you might find yourself in. I assure you it will be a great comfort to you. But not only did Jacob have the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PROMISES......

II. Jacob Had The Assurance of God’s Presence  vs. 15a
15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.

1. Here Jacob was, way out in the middle of nowhere......he is totally isolated from all humanity, and yet he is NOT ALONE!

   GOD GIVES JACOB A COMFORTING REMINDER..........

   “I am with you!”

2. During times of UNCERTAINTY in life we often feel this overwhelming sense of LONELINESS and ISOLATION. And not only do feel isolated from people, we at times feel isolated from God.

3. In his devotional book, EXPERIENCING GOD DAY BY DAY, Henry Blackaby writes these words:

   As a child of God you are never alone! Your Shepherd is with you at all times. You never have to call Him into your situation. You never have to wonder where He is. You never have to fear He will abandon you when your situation becomes too difficult.

   He goes before you; He walks beside you; He comes behind you. Just as He sees every sparrow and knows every hair on your head, so His gaze is constantly upon you.

   He comforts you with His strong presence in times of sorrow and grief and uncertainty. He leads you through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He does not necessarily lead you around the Valley as you might wish. There are times when the Shepherd knows the only way to get you where He wants to take you is to lead you down the path that passes through the dark Valley......yet it is through those times He walks closely with you to remind you He loves you and cares for you.”

In his time of uncertainty........Jacob had the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PROMISES and the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PRESENCE.

Thirdly we see...........

III. Jacob Had the Assurance of God’s Protection vs. 15a
15a I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.

1. Remember earlier I mentioned how “perilous” Jacob’s journey was. Looming over him was the danger of being tracked down by a vindictive, angry brother....... as well as potential danger from attacking wild animals or bandits.

2. Can you imagine how comforting it was to JACOB to know GOD WAS GOING TO PROTECT HIM on this journey.

3. During times of UNCERTAINTY in our life we are often overwhelmed by FEARS and WORRIES of what is going to happen to us.

   Does GOD’S PROTECTION mean He will never allow anything BAD or UNPLEASANT happen to us? NO! But what it does mean is that NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO US, GOD will give us the strength and courage to go through it!

4. Remember those comforting words in ROMANS 8: 31 & 37,38

   ROMANS 8:31, 37-39 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

   No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In his time of uncertainty, Jacob had the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PROMISES, the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PRESENCE and the ASSURANCE OF GOD’S PROTECTION.

Fourthly we see........
IV. Jacob Had The Assurance of God’s Provisions vs. 20-22

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear

21 so that I return safely to my father’s house then the Lord will be my God.

22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

1. Remember those words of Jesus in Matthew 6?

MATTHEW 6: 25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

Then Jesus went on to say in VERSE 33 “But seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”

2. Long before Jesus ever spoke those words, JACOB learned this valuable truth and that is GOD ALWAYS SUPPLIES THE NEEDS OF HIS PEOPLE!

3. Let me ask you something. If God was willing to PROVIDE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON as the sacrifice for your salvation and mine, doesn’t it stand to reason that GOD will provide all our other needs in life as well?

4. In these times when the economy is so bad with no hope of getting any better soon, probably most of us have some serious concerns about just how bad it is going to get, especially if you’re on a fixed income. Perhaps some of you are worrying about how you are going to buy groceries and keep a roof over your head.

Remember the words of David in Psalm 37:25? I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

5. While you and I don’t know what tomorrow holds, we know the One who holds tomorrow. And you and I can take great comfort in knowing that OUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL PROVIDE OUR EVERY NEED no matter how bad things get.

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CONCLUSION

In these times of uncertainty, we, like Jacob have four assurances from God

Like Jacob........

We Have The Assurance of God’s Promises.
We Have The Assurance of God’s Presence.
We Have The Assurance of God’s Protection.
And We Have The Assurance of God’s Provisions.

At some time or another, we've all read the very familiar story called FOOTPRINTS. Even if you've heard it or read it a hundred times, I think it beautifully summarizes what we've been thinking about here this morning. So if you would, permit me to share it with you in closing.

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, that you would walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you most, you would leave me.” The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child. I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”