

## **Pastor Rachel Deavers**

**Date: August 21, 2016**

**Title: “The House & the Gate”**

**Text: Genesis 28:10-19**

On March 21, 2010 at 6 PM, I arrived here for an evening service and a pizza party with the then, Gravity Student Ministries, as a newly credentialed (as of that morning) minister, full-time public school teacher, unmarried, no children, who had only preached one sermon...EVER and I had only led worship once...EVER. In fact, I don't know why Pastor Jim hired me? All of the major events of my life—getting married, suffering a miscarriage, having Hannah, leaving teaching, growing in ministry—have all happened here in this place. With you. In ministry, I know nothing else but Marlowe Assembly of God.

So, it felt very strange when over a year ago, the Lord began to tell me I was to leave here. As the district rolled out its plans for a new church planting initiative --to plant 32 churches in urban areas on September 17, 2017-- I found myself unable to control my emotions when hearing of the plan. I was literally quietly weeping at the C32 luncheon in May of 2015. I began immediately, that evening, to suffer panic attacks, which I had never before experienced. I was fearful of leaving my comfort zone; the enemy was on the prowl in my life. The thought of moving to Baltimore or D.C. to plant a church seemed exciting, yet I didn't want to live in a city. I couldn't see how I would belong in such an atmosphere; or how my gardening-loving husband could ever be happy growing tomatoes on the top of a roof in Baltimore City!

Have you ever met another believer, and INSTANTLY felt a connection with them? Like the Holy Spirit was reuniting you with someone you already knew? This year at district council, Nathan & I met Steve & Holly Grylls, C32 church planters from Cumberland, MD and in 15 minutes we forged a friendship with these people that is just amazing. They planted a church and 2 hope homes in Cumberland where they minister to the community and drug-addicted men & women and disciple them in the Lord, helping them to overcome the addictions and poor choices of the past. Leaving that 15 minute conversation I felt like something had been birthed in my Spirit. We travelled to Cumberland to visit their church this spring, met the women in the women's home and toured it, and ate lunch with Steve & Holly & their entire ministry team. Here's how the visit went: We went to service, while we were there, a teenager accidentally broke a window after service, glass falling everywhere downstairs in the children's ministry area. Holly looked at the teen and said “go get a broom & a dust pan and clean it up” and then went outside to meet with a girl who THAT MORNING decided to enter the hope home to begin a new chapter in her life. The girl sat outside the home in a chair, visible shaking and holding a Q-tip between her fingers to feel like she was holding a cigarette. She was drawing a picture on a sketch pad representing her new life, the life she was hoping to find now that she was getting help. Meanwhile, Steve was in the parking lot, talking to her boyfriend, trying to get him into the men's home. Then we all went to lunch.

First of all, I was amazed that a broken window wasn't a big deal. If it was me, I might have scolded the teen, told his parents, figured out a way for him to pay for the window, and cleaned it up myself because of the liability of him perhaps cutting himself and then his parents getting upset. I would have alerted Pastor Jim, who probably would have to tell the Board. But the window & the building weren't the focus—PEOPLE WERE. That is what was birthed in me. I guess unconsciously all of this time, I've thought “ministry” was the “stuff I do at church”. It's not. Ministry is not just about having credentials from a denomination, how many sermons you preach, or how many youth conventions you go to, all of which are wonderful things; the ministry Jesus called us to is REACHING THE ONE. Having the attitude that if I just reach one more for the Kingdom; if I just get one more into Heaven! This is what has been birthed in me and I cannot ignore it.

I remember early in my pregnancy with Hannah I had some pregnancy symptom that was really getting me down. I was thinking, “Oh no, I can't do 9 months of this!” The Lord quieted me in that moment and I said to Him, “This is my new adventure. I'm going to think of this as an adventure. I'm not going to get upset about every symptom; I'm just going to call it a part of my new adventure. Because in adventures, you are excited to not know where you are headed.” And birth? It's messy, it's hard, and it's painful but in the end you have new life. It's a new, unique life that God used you to create. And that new life resembles its parents.

I feel like the Lord is saying to me in this season that he's birthed in Nathan & I a new vision to do whatever it takes to just REACH ONE MORE. That might be a church plant and some hope homes in the Martinsburg area; when we don't know. Or it may just look like us working two full-time jobs and ministering to people on the streets of Martinsburg or wherever he calls us to. We aren't entirely sure yet because birth is messy. Birthing is also painful, because we have to leave the comfort of Marlowe and because we have to leave you, the people who have so wonderfully loved us and provided for us for 6 years. People who have become extra "grandparents" to Hannah; people who have become brothers & sisters and spiritual moms & dads to us; people who don't even know how important they are to our lives. But birth is also an exciting adventure that will bring new life that will look like the Father in Heaven. New life that will go on to create more new life; "being fruitful & multiplying".

I want to read a passage of scripture today that describes the vision God is birthing in Nathan & I, but it also contains truths for all of us. It's this passage that, I would like to suggest, births the vision God had for his people and contains the plan He has for humanity.

### **Genesis 28:10-19 (NASB)**

**10**Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. **11**He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. **12**He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. **13**And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. **14**"Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out [breakthrough] to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **15**"Behold, 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." **16**Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." **17**He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God [dwelling, habitation], and this is the gate of heaven."

**18**So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. **19**He called the name of that place Bethel [house of God]; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz [almond tree]."

So this event in Jacob's life took place as he was running away from his problems, namely Esau, his brother whom he deceived out of his inheritance. He's also heading to his uncle Laban's house to find a bride.

I think it's important to point out something here. This is a time when the presence of God didn't live inside of men like it does today. Remember, there is a division between the people and God because of sin. Jesus came, died, rose again so that the veil would be torn and the very presence of God could live IN US. This is before that. So in the Old Testament you see moments when the presence of God shows up in a place or upon a person, but not inside of them. So Jacob recognized that the presence is in that place because he had that dream. That place, Bethel, the house of God is where the presence was dwelling and Jacob says so and anoints the rock with oil (a symbol of the Spirit) and he makes a vow in that place. He is worshipping the presence of the Lord.

In fact the name of the place he changes to "BETHEL", or "house of God." The city had once been called Luz, meaning "almond tree". So do you know the biblical significance of the almond tree? Almond trees are the first to bud (sometimes as early as January) before all other trees; they are often seen as the first sign of new life--a sign of awakening. In Exodus, God tells Moses to make a Menorah with almond-shaped bowls for the lamp oil. This design insures that light shines forward, guiding people to safety. Almond trees signify the nation of Israel as the light of the world. In Numbers 17, Aaron's rod made from almond wood blossomed in his hands, indicating he would enter the priesthood. It's a symbol of honor & blessing. I believe that that the symbolism of the names here Luz & Bethel are significant; I would like to suggest that Luz was the place of new life for Jacob because of the revelation of God's presence he would receive there later in Genesis 35. It's at this place, once called Luz, now called Bethel (House of God) that God give Jacob a new name, "Israel" meaning "God prevails." I believe it's God's intention here to meet with Jacob and make his home with Israel.

Look what happens! Moses leads the people out of bondage so they may go and worship the Lord. In the wilderness on top of Mt. Sinai, the tangible glory cloud presence of God shows up. In the tabernacle Moses builds, the tangible glory

cloud presence of God shows up. He leads them with a pillar of fire and a cloud through the wilderness. Fast forward to Solomon's temple and the tangible glory cloud presence shows up after 120 trumpets are blown and multiple sacrifices are given. God has, even from the very garden of Eden, been looking for a place to dwell and call "home" with His people. Then He sends his son, as John describes him "the word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us". That word "dwell" means "tabernacled;" He came for only a time to inhabit that flesh; wasn't permanent, only temporary. Why? Where did he go? He went inside of us on the day of Pentecost! The 120 in the upper room were baptized with the Holy Spirit, which is the very tangible presence of God. Paul says it this way in Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship [poema], created [to make habitable] in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The word "created" means "to make habitable". You have been made habitable by Jesus through his sacrifice on the cross! In Corinthians Paul gets straight to the point: 1 Cor 6:19-20 "Or do you not know that your body is a temple [naos – "holy of holies", the temple of Jerusalem] of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body." He calls you the very temple in Jerusalem, the "holy of holies", the place where the veil stood between God and man. Jesus tore that veil and now takes up residence inside of YOUR BODY.

There's more! Let's turn to Matthew 17...

**1**Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. **2**And He was transfigured [a change on the outside that comes from the inside, transform] before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. **3**And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. **4**Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **5**While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" **6**When the disciples heard *this*, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. **7**And Jesus came to *them* and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid."

The word "transfigured" there is the greek word "metamorphoo" which is where we get the word metamorphosis. This word signifies a change into another form that is seen on the outside but comes from within. This word only appears 4 times in the Bible. Once in Matthew & Mark to describe the change that happens to Jesus in the moment of the transfiguration when the glory of God shines through Jesus. The other time is in Romans 12:2 & 2 Corinthians 3:18 and both of those instances describe what happens to US on this side of the cross.

Romans 12:2 "be TRANSFORMED by the renewing [restoration, complete change for the better affected by the Holy Spirit] of your mind"

2 Cor 3:18 **18**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Is it possible to be transfigured & transformed into the image of Christ? Is it possible to shine with the glory of God like Jesus did? Is it possible that YOU ARE THE HOUSING THE TANGIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD? YES!!!!!!

Moses' face glowed with the glory when he came off the mountain with the law so how much more can the glory shine through us once grace has been given through Jesus Christ?!

Stephen – Acts 6:15 **15**And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

Peter's shadow healed people.

Jesus tells us to "go and make disciples" and to "heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead." I know I can't do that in my own power, so it must mean that the tangible presence of God is going to move through me as I'm obedient to Him!

So if you need sermon points, I've got 2 of them for you today...

1. You are the house of God.
2. You are the gate of heaven.

Going back to Jacob's declaration: This is none other than the house of God [dwelling, habitation], and this is the gate [door] of heaven." What happens when you are in a dark room and you open the door to a room where light is? The dark room starts to lighten, right? You can now see light and know where you are go to.

Jesus says in John 8:12 “I am the light of the world and he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

He says in John 9:5 “While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.

In Acts, Saul is blinded by a light and it is Jesus.

During his transfiguration, which is what just read, it said that Jesus’ “garments became as white as light”.

While we sat in our spiritually dark room, Jesus came and opened the door or the gate to the Heavens, right? His presence on earth was the means by which we could spiritually see again.

But then what does he say? Matt 5:14 “YOU are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

If Jesus says in John 9:5 that WHILE he is in the world he is the light, then where is the light when he leaves? He said that when he goes, he will send the comforter, right? He said that if he stayed the comforter would not come. You see on the day of Pentecost we got much more than a prayer language...we got the light and the glory LIVING IN US! We are now the HOUSE of God and we are now the GATE through which the LIGHT comes!

So here comes the responsibility portion of today’s message. We have to be the light. We cannot keep our lights inside these four walls, or essentially we are putting our light under a bushel (“hide it under a bushel NO I’m gonna let it shine!”) How do we be the light and carry the glory? Through honor.

1 Peter 2:17 “Honor [timeo – estimate, fix the value, for the value of something belonging to one’s self] all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

The word for “honor” in this passage is “timeo” and it means “estimate a value”.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 when Paul says 19”Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

Honor is recognizing God’s glory resident inside of a person and then shining your light into their life. It’s as if you walked into their house--perhaps is messy, trash laying everywhere, paint peeling on the walls, dark—and you shined your light all around at the damage & destruction and saw the potential for a house flip. “I can do something with this,” you say. You saw that tearing down a wall over here, patching the floor over there, and a good scrub could make the house a mansion. I heard a Bob Hazelett once say that honor is “cleaning up messes and not telling anyone there was ever a mess there. You aren’t called to point out the messes, but to help clean them up before anyone else notices they are there.”

Honor is not pointing out a flaw. Honor isn’t telling people they are going to hell in their sin. Honor isn’t telling someone that they are sick because of their sin. Honor isn’t complaining about how terrible the world is.

How much are the people around us worth? How much is our family worth? How much is Falling Waters or Martinsburg worth? How much is the teen mom next door worth? How much is your pastor worth? How much is the president of the United States worth? The answer is, for all of these people, JESUS’ LIFE. What a precious price! Honor is treating people the way Jesus treats them. Honor is what grace looks like.

Honor looks like this: Recently I started working with a group called “Mercy to Others Ministry”. They go get almost expired food from Food Lions around the area and then take it to low income housing areas and pass it out for free and pray with people. I went one day and met a man named John. John smelled of liquor the moment I shook his hand. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, and he had a tattoo of Satan on his forearm. John got a couple of things and thanked us. Then he went around to all of the apartments telling people to come out and get some free food. He sat on the step of his house and watched out for the kids for 2 hours while I was there; kids whose parents were in their homes not paying one bit of attention to who their kids were taking to (us, strangers). As we were packing up John came back over to talk thank us again and chat. I looked at him; unkept, not showered, smelling of liquor, Satan tattoo and said “John, you are a protector of this apartment complex, aren’t you?” He paused for a moment and told me the story of how he brought the lady in the apartment next to us back to life the other day after a heroin overdose. Then he told me how he used to be a pimp and he would watch out for his girls. Then he told me about going to the church down the street and someone praying for him and he felt funny during the prayer. I said “John that was the power of God on you. He loves you and wants you to have a relationship with him. Can we pray for you?” He said yes so we prayed. I felt the power of

God come on me and I prayed for John to have a relationship with Jesus and I prayed, what I believe God saw in John; that he wanted to use him as a protector and a fighter for the Kingdom of God. I saw a plan that God had for his man; much more than alcohol and prostitutes. I saw a kingdom purpose for this man's life and I prayed it and called it out. John didn't give up alcohol that day. He didn't pray to ask Jesus in his heart; at least not with us. But we honored him. We looked into his house and saw potential. We saw how God could use him for his glory. And we called it out and I'm going back there later in the month to check up on him when we do our food runs.

**CONCLUSION:** There is a game that is sweeping the nation called "Pokemon Go". The game uses the GPS and camera on your phone and tells you to physically go to places to find pokemon (little creatures) and capture them. Marlowe AG is a pokemon stop so if you find people wandering around looking at their phones, it's because they are catching little creatures here. The game is an alternate reality; technology inviting you into an adventure, but it's a counterfeit. Jesus is inviting you into a real adventure TO SEE WHAT HE SEES, and what he sees is real. He wants us to see new life in the broken and call it out. That's honor. That's grace. And it's exactly what he did with you.

He made you the house of his presence and the door for people to get to Jesus.