

“Dreams That You Dare to Dream”
Jeremiah 23:5-6, 25-32; Joel 2:26-29
Luke 23:36-43
Rev. David Hutchinson
Sunday, November 24, 2019

How do you think YOU will be remembered?

I ended my sermon on All Saints Sunday with that question.

We had just said names of people who had died - - who we remembered.

During the sermon I shared some of the memories of Helen Purkerson.

And we DID some remembering, of people who have led the way in the past.

There were photos up front, arranged by Adrienne.

We looked at the photos, and did some remembering.

And I ended that day by asking: how do you think YOU will be remembered?

Have you wondered about that at all since then?

Or have you ever wondered about that?

What parts of your life will live on?

What things that you did - - will be described over and over?

Are there things - - that you hope will be forgotten?

And - - are there STILL - - DREAMS - - out there that you HOPE will come true?

There may be - - things you still have left to do - - that you HOPE become your legacy.

And I bring THAT up because - - I believe that there connections between our DREAMS
- - and how we are remembered?

And here's a question: Do you think - - that any of the people YOU remember - -
ever sat and DREAMED of doing the very thing - - that you remember them for?

For example...

Do you think Nancy Federici ever sat and dreamed of donating a vacant lot for a Habitat for Humanity house? / I mean years before it happened... / Maybe not. But she probably DID dream of a world in which more people had a safe home of their own.

Do you think that Harold Scudder ever dreamed that the church bell would be rung in his memory at his funeral? / I doubt it - - but I'm sure he would have been pleased. / And I'm very sure - - he dreamed of people listening to that bell - - and making their way to the church on Sunday morning - - drawn to its sound.

Did the first Rev. Hutchinson ever dream there would be a building here named after him? / Probably not. / But he DID dream of a church building standing here. And now because of that dream - - we are here in this sanctuary.

I wonder about the dreams of the people we remember - - because I think there is a connection - - between the dreams we dream - - and how we are remembered.

This morning's Old Testament reading from Jeremiah describes dreams - - but in a very different way. / According to Jeremiah - - and the Old Testament way of understanding things - - there are GOOD dreams and BAD dreams - - and the GOOD dreams come from GOD - - and the BAD dreams are deceptive - - and false.

The prophet Jeremiah WARNS of the dreams of the false prophets.

According to Jeremiah they say

“I have dreamed this - - and I have dreamed that”

But they are not telling the truth!

“How long will there be LIES in their hearts?”, asks Jeremiah.

Well - - as if in answer - - another prophet Joel asks,

“How long will it take for GOOD dreams to become the thing?”

The answer, according to Joel: “As long as it takes to listen to the Spirit of God”.

Joel says, “WHEN God pours out the Holy Spirit on us - - THEN young men will see visions - - and old men will DREAM dreams”.

Luke quotes this very thing at Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2.

So - - the Holy Spirit is present in the CHURCH.

The Holy Spirit is the ongoing presence of Jesus spirit in us - - the church.

When we are together - - listening - - working - - praying...

NOT - - when we are off on our OWN - - some false prophet - - disconnected.

The ones who lie - - according to this way of seeing it - - are on their own.

They are disconnected from community.

Disconnected from the voice - - of memory.

Disconnected from the church - - the body of Christ...

Our dreams - - make memories - - which make - - future dreams.

Mary Luti - - a writer at Andover Newton - - describes asking a class of High School students to describe their earliest memory. / And many of the answers were as you might expect - - things like: my mom - - my house - - my dog...

But one Jewish boy - - when his turn came - - said: “Abraham”

His earliest memory - - was father Abraham. / Because Abraham was the first memory of his PEOPLE. / Abraham - - is the beginning of history - - in the Old Testament. / Abraham was his answer to the question about his earliest memory - - because he was part - - of his people.

She said she was so moved by his response, she said: “If 12 other kids were not asking, “who’s Abraham?”, I would have sat down on the floor right beside him”

We are part of a community - - of dreams - - and memories - - and dreams...

Listen - - for the true Spirit - - and the dreams that come from God.

They will guide us - - if we let them.

Shirley Eaton was the first woman ordained as an Elder at Plymouth.

She wrote up a memory for All Saints day and put in the mail - - but it did not get to me in time for that day. / It arrived too late. / Nevertheless - - I will refer to it today. / Shirley remembered a children's clothing project called, "Open End".

She concluded - - after describing collecting used clothing, laundering it, and sewing some clothes - - by saying this:

"I can certainly remember how I felt".

If we lose track of the details - - as we often do - - when our memories age...

I think we hold on to the memory of - - how we FELT.

Dreams that are connected to God - - and the community - - FEEL a certain way.

They feel good.

We recognize them.

AND - - FALSE or BAD dreams - - feel a certain way too.

And the prophets call us to not only dream GOD'S dreams - - but to RESIST the things in the world that are FALSE - - and DESTRUCTIVE - -

When we wake in the night - - and it is NOT a dream from God - - but fear...

Can we support one another - - as we seek God's way for our lives?

In the story, "The Dream Eater", a boy named Yukio cannot sleep - - because of a bad dream - - about a monster.

He tells his father - - and his father says, "I have a BAD dream TOO". / His father's bad dream is about planting the WRONG crop - - and everyone going hungry.

His mother has a bad dream - - about losing her best friend.

His grandfather's bad dreams - - are about the end of his life.

So - - Yukio decides to go on a walk. / He thinks about all this and ends up down by the river. / And by the river he sees a strange looking CREATURE - - an animal that feeds on dreams - - - the "dream eater".

He tells the creature the bad dreams of his family - - and the creature agrees to help. / The dream eater - - returns to the village that night - - and DEVOURS the bad dreams - - leaving people sleeping soundly.

With the bad dreams at bay - - now they can listen better - - for good dreams.

Jeremiah - - wants to replace the bad false dreams - - with God's word.

Joel says the Holy Spirit is kind of the OPPOSITE of the dream eater:

The Holy Spirit is a dream FEEDER.

The Spirit feeds us - - dreams from God.

But we have to open up - - and be fed!

I believe God wants to do such GREAT things in our lives.

As we celebrate Christ as king - - we put Jesus - - above all earthly power.

We put God's dream for the world - - above ANY earthly human falseness.

As we think about how WE might do that at Plymouth Church - - let me end today by telling you a story of another congregation...

Highland Park Presbyterian Church was located in North Minneapolis in a neighborhood where my mother grew up. / The neighborhood has changed a LOT since my mother went to North High.

The church was involved in the neighborhood over the years - - through involvement in a head start program - - and an after school center. / Their elders wanted their legacy to be connected to the community around the church. / But I'm not sure any of them ever DREAMED - - of exactly what happened. / Even though - - it did fit perfectly - - with their dreams for the church.

As the neighborhood changed ethnically and what was once a primarily white neighborhood became a primarily African-American one - - the church kept asking how to be the church there - - how to keep dreaming its dream.

As membership declined and people died or moved away - - one remaining elder said, "If ministering in this neighborhood means giving away our church building - - that's what we will do. / Ministry is our calling - - not this building."

In 1999 the remaining elders of what was once a primarily white congregation gave their building away to the newly chartered primarily African-American - - multicultural congregation. / A few of them joined it. / It was four times the size of the church that was there in 1998.

The organizing pastor, named Alike Galloway once described to me - - the dream that called her to be pastor there.

She said that one night she was praying about what to do to serve God. / And she had this dream - - in which she saw manna falling from the sky.

She wondered what it meant - - why would this Old Testament bread - - falling from the sky - - be an image for her future? / And she got this overwhelming feeling, she said, that she had misunderstood the dream.

God was saying, "Go back to sleep - - listen."

So she did - - and she dreamed the SAME dream again - - but this time she looked closer - - and it was NOT manna - - falling from the sky - - it was SNOW!

Snow - - which falls a LOT in Minnesota!

But NOT very much where SHE was from.

So she dared to follow her dream - - and move to Minneapolis.

In 2011 - - there was an article about how the congregation - - with her as pastor turned over their church again - - this time to neighborhood victims of sex trafficking - - and created a safe place for them.

And now - - twenty years later - - I still remember visiting that church and her.

So returning to Plymouth Church...

What are OUR dreams?

And HOW will we be remembered?

And how will we stay connected - - to one another - - and to God?

May we all - - DARE - - to DREAM.

Amen.