

February 14th, 2021 • Transfiguration Sunday • Online Worship

“Dare to Dream: Beyond Our Wildest Dreams”

Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris



Mark 9:2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

During this Epiphany season, we have been daring to dream! Dreaming of life made new. The world made new. Daring to live into a new dream even in this pandemic time.

Remember where it all starts? In God’s own dream, God’s dream of the promised kingdom of love and righteousness and peace. God’s dream proclaimed by the prophets and made incarnate in Jesus. In Jesus of Nazareth, God dreamed the ancient dream anew. Of a promised land flowing with milk and honey, a land where everyone lived under their own vine and fig tree in peace and unafraid, a land where the lowly were lifted up and the poor were set free.

God dreamed the dream anew in the person of Jesus and sent him to us to bring life and hope and to be the Light of the world.

Jesus dreamed the dream into his own time. Baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit, beloved Child of God, Jesus moved among the cities and villages of the region preaching and teaching and healing, all the while inviting others to be his disciples and live into the dream alongside him. “You will see greater things than these,” Jesus promises them. Come with me and live with me into the dream.

Philip, Nathanael, Andrew, Simon, James and John. Calling them by name, saying “Come, follow me.” Philip, Nathanael, Andrew, Simon, James and John—ordinary folks, until Jesus calls them into something bigger, something better, a new dream of hope and purpose. Calling them into the work of preaching and teaching and healing and giving them the power to set people free and make the world whole.

This Sunday the Epiphany season concludes with the story of the Transfiguration. Taking Peter, James and his brother, John, Jesus ascends the mountain to pray. There, the three disciples enter into the presence of God and they see what they can barely yet believe. They see right into the very heart of God. Their beloved friend and teacher, the very human Jesus, undergoes a metamorphosis, a change in form. No ordinary teacher, this. No ordinary friend, this. So who IS he, they wonder? Are they dreaming?

On the mountaintop, Jesus is transfigured before them. The appearance of his face changes, taking on the radiance usually reserved for heavenly beings. His clothes become dazzling white. The presence of God is revealed, shining through the face of their teacher and they see that this very Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God, Christ the Lord.

In that moment of confusion and fear, the presence of God envelops the three disciples, softening the brightness of the light, and they hear those reassuring words: “This is my Son, my Beloved. Listen to him.” And as they descend, they do listen and they try to comprehend but it’s hard because he’s telling them something so awesome, so new, so wonderful that they just can’t yet take it in. This is beyond their wildest dreams.

There are experiences in life that leave us speechless, times when words are utterly inadequate. Those experiences can come at high points of wonder, love, and praise, as for those early disciples. But they can come, too, at life's low points, when we are left not knowing what to say. Times of darkness and pain. Times of loss and grief. There come times in life when, like Peter, we do not know what to say, or how to put words to the sorrow or the fear that we feel.

The Transfiguration is for those times, too, not just the mountain top experiences. For, yes, the Son of God will rise from the dead, but first, he will walk through the valley of the shadow of death and he will know, just as we know, the pain of suffering and death. The Light of the World that he is the light that shines in the darkness. It is the light that the darkness can never overcome.

I think God and Jesus gave those first disciples the experience of the Transfiguration because they knew that the times of darkness would come and they would need internal spiritual resources to carry them through what would come—his betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. They would need to know about the everlasting light.

In the transfigured face of Christ, that light shines in our lives as well. Through grief and fear, through doubt and cynicism, through violence and war, through suffering and death, our way is illumined by the holy light of God's presence and love. We see it first on the mountaintop, where God's presence draws near. And we carry it down to the flatlands and the valleys of our lives, even through the valley of the shadow of death.

And still, we dare to dream.

As we worship this morning, I invite us all take a few moments and go deep into our own spirit. It's been a hard year, and we are carrying many things. Yet, might we dare ask this morning: What am I dreaming for? Where do I dream for God's light to shine? Where do I dream for God's love to bring healing and renewal? What do I dare to dream?

What people and places come to mind? What personal hurts and needs? What hopes for your family? For our nation? For our church?

Can you hear Jesus calling your name? Can you hear his invitation to come alongside him and live into the dream?

Friends, even now, even this morning—or whenever you're logging into this worship service—God is inviting you to dream, inviting you into the dream, God's dream, the Jesus dream, of life and a world made new. God is still proclaiming: "Behold, I am making all things new." And the young will see visions and the old will dream dreams!

Through us, God's dream for all creation is made new, generation after generation, beyond our wildest dreams. Let us open our lives and dare to dream, beyond the challenges, the frustrations, the obstacles of the moment...let us dream for a new day to begin. Thanks be to God! AMEN