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Bermuda Hundred UMC  
*Awakening to God’s Dream Sermon Series*  
November 29, 2015  
Isaiah 11: 1-9; Psalm 126; Romans 15: 4-13  
“How to Dream Again”

As a child we spend often spent our days dreaming.  
We turned a swing sets into circus, rugs into islands and linoleum into hot lava…

Yesterday, I watched my children playing – they jumped over alligator invested waters, baked pies, and climbed mountains--- all in the backyard… playing, dreaming, imagining possibilities.

Do you remember carefree afternoons playing outside—imagining so many possibilities around you?

Playing until it was too dark and too cold to play outside?

Maybe you remember having a “Career Day” in school? Especially when you were little- what did you want to be? What did you DREAM of being?

An Astronaut, Ballerina, Chef, NFL Quarterback?

What did you DREAM of doing?

//Now – we dream--- but too often- we’ve forgotten how to dream with our eyes open.

Advent is a time to AWAKEN to God’s Dream—for the World and For you.

The world says, “STOP DREAMING- Grow Up – Get on with the program—Wake up to reality.
When we read Psalm 126 we hear a different take on dreaming. We are to wake up—but not to a harsh so-called realism – but to a Dream God has for us!

For the Psalmist tells us that -- To be like those who dream – is to have your mouth filled with laughter… and shouts of joy on our tongue. Others who observe you can look at you and say, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

To be like those who dream—is have God transform sadness to joy.

How – How do we dream?

Those who were exiles from Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity, held onto a hope of restoration and return. The psalm tells us restoration and rejoicing.

"When the Lord restores the fortunes of Zion," – Remember when God did this? They say? They are remembering the return of exiles from Babylon but also seeking to see the broader story of all divine restorations to mind:

• the restoration of Sarah to Abraham
• the restoration of Joseph to Jacob and his brothers
• the restoration of the people to the land after the Exodus
• the restoration of the ark to the people after the Philistines captured it

The restoration of the temple after the exile
• the birth of the Messiah- God sending him into the world

The Cross and the restoration from slavery to sin and death
• the resurrection- and restoration of our very salvation and the promise of eternal life!
  - The Restoration of the created order- of God hearing the groaning of all the earth

When the Lord … restored…. We were like those who dream.

“Those who dream”—those who dream—are those who receive visions from God (see Joel 2:28-29). Prophets received these visions in prayer with God. Therefore:
1) Divinely wrought restoration requires the lines of communication are open between God and people.
And when the lines of communication are open-- those who receive visions often experience and express ecstatic joy--like David dancing beside the ark as it was brought into Jerusalem. The picture, then, is of spontaneous and uncontainable joy: "our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy."

Restoration follows dreams.

When we dream- God’s dream—we can see and experience God’s restoring power.

How can we dream like those who dream?

Isaiah says—

“A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse.”

How do we dream again?

2.) To dream, we must believe God can do the impossible! This becomes more clear as we keep those lines of communication open, as we see more visions God has for us to see… We can see as Isaiah sees:

A stump is dead.

Gone.

Forgotten..

Over.

And yet....

God does something new.

That is what Advent hope is about.

It is not the same tree. It is a new shoot.

Something new rises up.
That doesn’t spring from us. It comes from God. Beyond us, but calling to us.

What is an impossible dream God may have for us?

For you?

For the world?

Isaiah says, “They will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain; for all the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” -- ALL THE WORLD- will know the Lord—and there will be no more hurt and destruction.

Isaiah tells us that when this king comes- this Messiah—He will lead the ultimate advent of the peaceable kingdom where harmony between all creation-- creates a new community.

It seems impossible—but God does the impossible.

What impossible thing do you need God’s help with?

----What’s a dream God may have for our community?

What we think is beyond help—God says something new will come.

Write down one thing that seems beyond restoration.

It can be health, it can be a relationship, it can be a person you are praying for—it can be world peace—There is plenty the world tells us is beyond repair—But Jesus comes not simply to repair—Jesus comes to make things new!

And- The prophet Isaiah –tells us that the “The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him.”

The early church father Augustine reminded us that “our hearts are restless until they rest in God.”

We cannot dream- or even see the possibility of dreams- until we rest in Jesus.

The Spirit of wisdom and understanding will be on Jesus.

The Spirit of counsel and might.
The spirit of counsel and might,

The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord--- do you remember what fear of the Lord is the beginning of?? WISDOM!

And His delight—shall be in the fear of the Lord.

Jesus, our Messiah and Savior will delight—**all His joy** --will be in being “in fear”/ in AWE of the powerful possible things the Almighty God can and will do.

Therefore-

3.) **For us to dream again— Jesus brings it, creates it, carries it, calls it, creates, makes it happen. Jesus is the WORD of God Incarnate. The desires and words of God come alive through Jesus Christ.**

SO the Dream -God awakens for the world—comes through Jesus Christ.

And when Jesus comes alive in us—we can dream.

When we dream-- others can see a transformation in us.

We fear that the world will mock our dreaming---seeing it as petty, silly, childish optimism.....

But the Psalmist says, “When we were like those who dream”  It was said **among the nations**, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

3.) **For us to truly Dream- Others see a change happening in us and they inspire us to keep dreaming.**

It took “the nations” – those who worshiped other gods and who often threaten Israel—they are praising God and they are the ones—to point out what God was doing for them.

How unlikely that these nations are the ones who see and say, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

And then God’s people repeat: “The Lord has done great things for us.”

“God's gracious and faithful acts of restoration are so self-evident, **even the blind nations** can see them. And because the blind nations see those acts, the often-even-
more blind people of God can see them, too.”

Sometimes for us to trust in God’s dream—we have to hear it from others. And sometimes the most likely others....

They can see God’s dream in us sometimes long before we awaken to it.

--- Who helps you see God’s dream for you?

We see in the New Testament—when the Three Kings-- non-Israelite magi coming to worship the one who was born "King of the Jews," or when the Angel announces to the Shepherds that Jesus came for ALL the People, or when the Roman centurion who announced, "Truly this man was God's Son!" And when Paul speaks in Romans saying that the good news of Jesus Christ is for Jews and Gentiles alike. All of these unlikely people see the dream and notice! It

Not only do others see the transformation of a dream. But it catches.

4.) When we Awaken to God’s dream led by Jesus Christ- it is shared. Not one person can own God’s dream alone—in unity we Awaken to God’s Dream!

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he prays that God will grant all people to live in harmony with one another, and with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says this is only possibly because of the hope Jesus gives us.

Hope is a dream that God supplies and drives.

“Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.”- Jonas Salk

Jonas Salk- the inventor of the Polio Vaccine said this. Polio was not the deadliest disease, but it was the most feared. But polio inspired such fear because it struck without warning and researchers were unsure of how it spread from person to person. In the years following World War II, polls found the only thing Americans feared more than polio was nuclear war.ii
Not only did he dream of a cure for polio – but he shared it with the world and refused to patent it. It was not His Dream—it was a Dream much bigger than his own dream.

On April 12, 1955, the day the Salk vaccine was declared “safe, effective and potent,” legendary CBS newsman Edward R. Morrow interviewed Salk and asked who owned the patent. “Well, the people, I would say,” said Salk in light of the millions of charitable donations raised by the March of Dimes that funded the vaccine’s research and field testing. “There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?” Lawyers for the foundation had investigated the possibility of patenting the vaccine but did not pursue it, in part because of Salk’s reluctance.iii

Paul’s letter to the Romans begins with hope and ends with hope.

That is the beginning of the dream God brings in Jesus Christ.

It starts with hope-- that God can do something new in us and in the world around us!

Paul writes the Gospel in a nutshell here—Welcome one another—as Christ has welcomed you.

Welcome one another to this hope.

Too often we find that we dismiss and tear down the hope in others.

That is not what we are called to do--- Paul says, “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

One voice- Together- in Harmony-

This is the image we are given in Isaiah’s words to us of the lion and the lamp, the wolf and the lamp, the leopard and the kid, the bear and the cow, the lion and the ox... all together grazing...

And it all began with a little child to lead us born in a cave stable among the animals and the hay.

This is the possible peace—Brought forth in the dream of hope Jesus Christ
Let us not lose this hope—"for hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

How do we dream again?

We cling to the hope of Jesus Christ who has and is bringing forth what we thought impossible into reality transforming us with hope into unity! Amen.

For what does God dream for this day?

For what do you dream of this day?

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3 Ibid.