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## *Believe In The Dreams of the Person You Love*

**A sermon by the Very Rev. Sam Candler**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Advent – Year A**

It was a few days before Christmas. A woman woke up one morning and told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Christmas. What do you think this dream means?" "Oh," he replied, "you'll know the day after tomorrow."

The next morning, she turned to her husband and said the same thing, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Christmas. What do you think this dream means?" "You'll know tomorrow." he said.

On the third morning, the woman woke up and smiled at her husband, "I just dreamed again that you gave me a pearl necklace for Christmas. What do you think this dream means?" He smiled back, "Oh, you'll know tonight."

That evening, the man came home with a small package and presented it to his wife. She was delighted. She opened it gently. But when she did, she found -- a book! It was titled "The Meaning of Dreams."

What have you been dreaming about lately?

Some of us are dreaming about wonderful possibilities. We're dreaming of pearl necklaces and sugar plum fairies, new bicycles and upgraded computers. I hope all those dreams come true!

Today's gospel lesson, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, is about a dream, Joseph's dream. Besides the wise men, a few verses later, Joseph is the only person in the New Testament who dreams. Other characters have visions, and the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary in the Gospel of Luke. But only Joseph dreams, maybe like the Joseph in the Book of Genesis whose dreams caused his brothers to sell him away.

At Christmas time, only the Gospel of Matthew tells Joseph's side of the story. The more familiar story about the birth of Jesus, which we have known for as long as we have seen Christmas pageants, is about Mary receiving the word of the Lord, from an angel. But that story is only in the Gospel of Luke.

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story from another point of view, maybe a forgotten point of view these days. Matthew tells the story from the man's point of view, Joseph's point of view. All the action in Matthew's birth narrative revolves around Joseph taking action. Nothing against Mary and Luke, of course! But it's good, once every three years in our lectionary cycle, to hear the story from Joseph's point of view!

(By the way, in our two other gospels, Mark and John, there is no account whatsoever of the physical birth of Jesus. We have four gospels, and they differ dramatically in how they tell the story of Jesus's birth. That's why we have four gospels. And that's why we have many types of Christians!)

Surely, Joseph was in a troubled way. Joseph, a man of decency and responsibility, realized that his betrothed was actually pregnant before they were married. What should he do?

Well, he took time to sleep. He took time to rest. He took time to dream. Somehow, it was in his dream that Joseph consolidated things; he put it all together. He realized something wonderful and astounding. Ancient scriptures, an angel, all sorts of theologizing, came flooding into his soul. Yes, God would enter the world. Immanuel, "God With Us" would be born to his wife, as crazy as that was to understand.

Joseph had to trust the angel in his dream, but Joseph also had to trust someone else. Joseph had to trust Mary. I know Mary would be his wife, and surely Joseph must have loved Mary. But still, this took a lot of trust! For Joseph, the way of salvation meant trusting someone else.

This is why Joseph's dream is so important. Joseph dreamed of the salvation of the world. And he dreamed that true salvation comes through someone else.

That is the lesson for us, too. Like Joseph sometimes, we are supposed to trust God and then get out of the way. Trust that God is working through our wife, and then get out of the way. Trust that God is working in our children, and then get out of the way.

Imagine young Mary, minding her own business, suddenly being overcome with news of a great conception, a great presence of the divine. Wouldn't it be great if such a revelation might happen again?

Well, it did happen again. The angel did appear to someone besides Mary. The story is recorded right in the Bible, but not in Luke. It appears in Matthew. The angel did appear to someone else. The angel also appeared to Joseph.

Now, if the angel can appear to Mary, and then also appear to Joseph, that means that the angel can appear to you and me, too. In the Bible, the annunciation does not occur only once, but twice – not just to a woman, but also to a man. Not just to Mary and Joseph, but also to you and to me!

What are you giving for Christmas this year? I do not mean what are you getting. We all want something wonderful, I am sure. But what are you *giving* for Christmas?

The greatest gift you can give this year is to believe in somebody, to believe in someone's dreams, to believe that God is working in the person beside you. That's the gift that Joseph gave Mary, and, thus, the gift that Joseph gave the entire world.

Likewise, the great gift you can give is to have faith in someone else; believe in their dreams. Believe in the dreams of the person you love. Believe in the dream of your husband. Believe in the dream of your wife. Believe in the dreams of your children. Believe in the dream of your hero, your leader, your friend. Believe in their dreams!

When we believe in the dreams of another person, we are in relationship. God works through those relationships. God works through both Mary and Joseph. God needs both Luke's story of the annunciation and Matthew's story of Joseph's dream. They are miracle stories.

God works through a young and wonderful woman, and her husband believes in her. It is a miracle repeated again and again. Believe in the dreams of the person you love. Believe in dreams this Christmas, and Jesus will be born again. Believe in dreams this Christmas, and God will appear in the world.

AMEN.