
To Be Like Those Who Dream

A sermon by the Very Rev. Sam Candler
The Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 25, Year B

PSALM 126

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, *
then were we like those who dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter, *
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations, *
"The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us, *
and we are glad indeed.
Restore our fortunes, O Lord, *
like the watercourses of the Negev.
Those who sowed with tears *
will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, *
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves. (Psalm 126-1-7)*

"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
Then were we like those who dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with shouts of joy."

Ah! To be like those who dream!

Sometimes I complain about bad dreams. (you know, "a fitful dream, the morning will exhaust"). I confess that I get tired of people like me, who complain about bad dreams!

Why is it that we so often see the bad dreams, but we don't see the good dreams? You know, there are great dreams, too. There are some great dreams around us. Let's dream them Let's dream some great and fun dreams!

Yes, sometimes I complain about people who complain. Some complain, for instance, that the church is dying these days, that the church is losing vitality, that the church is not connecting to where people are. Some complain about our country, or our family, the young generation, the old generation, the men, the women. And, then, we complain about those who complain!

So we sit, together, on the side of the road, blind and begging, complaining to each other. I am like Bartimaeus, the blind man, bemoaning fate. And I am also among the disciples saying, "Be quiet, be quiet" (Mark 10:48). "Give up the complaining." I am complaining just as much as the complainers.

What do we really want? That is what Jesus asked the blind man, Bartimaeus. What is it that you really want?

"I want to see!" he exclaimed.

Sweet Jesus, oh my. I do, too. I want to see, too. In particular, I want to see the good. In particular, I want to see some good dreams. Ah! To be like those who dream!

A few times every year, I remind the people around me: Be careful of what you tend to listen to, pay attention to what you watch. Do you want to watch the presentations of fear and dishonor? Do you want to listen to the loudspeakers of paranoia and anxiety? Do you want to be deaf and blind to the reality of good things all around you?

The community of faith is supposed a community of dreamers! A community of good dreamers! We are supposed to remember "when the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, when we were like those who dream, when our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy."

Dreams tend to happen when we sleep. And that is a good thing. Whether in the day—a daydream—or in the night—a nightdream—dreams happen when we pause, when we stop, when we rest. It is okay to stop on the side of the road and take a rest.

I have a spiritual suggestion for all of us this morning: When you pause to take a rest, when you prepare for sleep at night, make a point of intending to have a good dream. Speak to your soul at rest, and say, "I want to have a good dream tonight." Say to your self, "I intend, I intend, to dream a good dream tonight." And, you will. Ah! To be like those who dream!

The prophet, Joel, speaking for God, said, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. (Joel 2:28). Good dreams are what keep old men from being grumpy old men. Good visions are what keep young men from being angry young men. (And women, too!)

The dreamers are the people who change the world. And the dreamers of good dreams change the world for the good! Jacob dreamed of a ladder to heaven with angels going up and down. Joseph dreamed of some lean years, okay, but then some rich years that would save his people! Another Joseph, betrothed to Mary, dreamed that his wife would bear a beautiful child of the Holy Spirit, who would save people. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream that changed the world.

Ah! To be like those who dream! Let's dream some good things! We do not have to be bound to bad dreams. We can make good dreams part of our spiritual vocabulary. We can make good dreams the major themes of our spiritual vocabulary, our spiritual life. I want to go to bed at night and imagine dreaming good things!

It turns out, this fall, that I am officiating at lots of weddings. And we cathedral clergy are, too. Yesterday, three of us priests officiated at three different weddings, in three different places. What fun they are! I salute people who are getting married these days. They are making good on their dreams; they are committing themselves to their good dreams. And they provide examples of good dreams to us, and to the world around them. People getting married help the world become a better place!

I salute people who are participating in the dreams and visions around this church, too. We are making good on the vision of expanding the mission of Cathedral Towers, providing low-income housing for seniors. What a dream that is! We are making good on the vision of a new chapel of prayer here, the Good Faith Chapel. We are making good on encouraging the faith of children and young people in this church! We are making good on the vision of broad pastoral and spiritual care here. We are making good on Isaiah's vision of a "house of prayer for all people."

There are good dreams being dreamed here at the Cathedral of St. Philip. People are seeing some beautiful visions. The spirit of God is being poured out on all flesh, yes, even upon the complainers who sit by the side of the road, and even upon the complainers who complain about the complainers.

"What is it that you want me to do for you?" asked Jesus. "I want to see," said the blind man, "I want to see visions, the visions of hope in the world, the visions of love and joy. I want to see like God sees."

"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has made you well."

AMEN.

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