



GPS GUIDE: NOVEMBER 19, 2023 G r o w . P r a y . S t u d y .

Sermon Series: A Work in Progress

Sermon: Where We Are Going: The Next 150 Years

Monday: Read 1 Samuel 3: 1-10

"The word of the Lord was rare in those days (1 Sam. 3:1)." Several years ago I began to have a recurring dream. Someone would call out my name and I would wake up, assuming it to be one of my children. But no one was ever there. I would drift off only to have the same thing happen again. I recounted this dream to a trusted mentor who reminded me of the call of Samuel and asked if it might be God who was speaking to me. He suggested I might seek to hear God's voice in rare and precious ways. I had read of many dream accounts in the scriptures but never – not once – thought God might actually speak to me this way. In the years since, I have spent more time opening myself for God to enter into my life in "rare" ways. Have you ever had an experience like young Samuel? If so, did you recognize God's voice then? Did you have your own "Eli" who pointed you in the right direction? How might you be more open to a "rare" encounter with God?

Prayer: Lord, open me to your rare and precious ways of speaking. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Matthew 1: 18-25

I wonder why God didn't take an easier way to come to us? It seems to me God risked a lot trusting that Joseph would be open to a dream laden messenger's instruction. You would think God would have taken an easier way. But God did not. And somehow that deepens our understanding of how very much God will risk for all of us. We don't know what doubts and misgivings Joseph later entertained along his way, but we do know that Joseph did what he was called to do then. He did not leave. He did not cast Mary aside. Rather, he stood with Mary. He claimed that baby boy as his own and gave him the name of Jesus which means "God saves." It was the decision of a lifetime for Joseph. It was one he could never have expected to make and yet, it is also a dilemma which will parallel one we will probably all face at one time or another as we are called to sort out how to do the right thing in a situation that at first seems all wrong. And when you do that. When you step up and do what is right and good in the face of earthly 'wisdom' or advice which would urge you otherwise. When you act with

forgiveness and hope and trust, well then, the world changes. It surely did with Joseph and Mary and Jesus. And it does every other time, too. What might God be doing here and now in the life of FCC to bring about a future of hope for others? Can FCC be as bold with our faith as Joseph was? What new thing might God be doing in our faithful actions today that will bring hope for the future?

Prayer: Urge us, O God, to continue to risk in order to bring your gospel into the world for generations to come. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Genesis 28:10-17

God has often guided people with dreams and visions. Jacob had no vision greater than his own survival, until God promised him descendants who would bless the whole earth. Over 100 years ago a missionary named Joseph Hartzell envisioned young Africans carrying books to learn in a valley. Today that valley houses Africa University, teaching young people from all over the continent. Where would we be today if Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had not shared his dream of racial equality? One writer described the spiritual gift of faith as “the ability to look at a field of rocks and see a cathedral.” In what ways have you seen it be true that no great thing happens without one or more people dreaming it first? What big dreams are exciting or energizing you right now? What big dreams is God calling our church to dream?

Prayer: May our dreams and visions be those that bring new life and justice for your people. Amen.

Thursday: Read Jeremiah 14: 13-14 and 23: 16-17

The prophet Jeremiah found false “prophets” telling the Israelites that all would be well even as he warned them of the dangers of their disastrous spiritual course. It’s important that we validate that our big visions are from God, and not just a projection of our own wishes. This is one reason we practice our faith in community rather than going it alone. We pray together, listen for God’s wisdom together, hold one another accountable for faithful living. What are some of the best ways of “double-checking” how well a vision fits with God’s purposes? How is our congregation a good accountability partner for discerning God’s purposes?

Prayer: Lord God, help me and our congregation listen carefully and responsively for your visions. Amen.

Friday: Read Acts 2:14-18

At the feast of Pentecost, just weeks after Jesus’ crucifixion, skeptics tried to explain Spirit-filled Christians as a result of strong drink. The apostle Peter, unafraid after meeting the risen Christ, boldly quoted Joel 2 and said the Holy Spirit’s striking descent fulfilled the prophet’s words. Peter emphasized that Joel’s prophecy promised God’s Spirit to old and young, male and female, even slaves. In other words, God has a dream, a purpose, for every person’s life—including yours. Have you ever been tempted to feel that you are too old or too young for God to do much of anything with your life? Are there other factors (education, health, financial status, etc.) that make you feel the Holy Spirit ought to find someone other than you to work through?

How do Joel’s and Peter’s all-inclusive words call you to look for what God wants to do through you?

Prayer: Lord, send your Spirit to fill me and use me right now, where I am, then give me the courage to respond in faith. Amen.

Saturday: Read 1 Kings 3: 5-14

As Solomon consolidated his royal power, but before he finished the palace and the Temple in Jerusalem, the young king made visits outside the city. On one visit to a Gideon, a “high place” used for local worship, Solomon slept in the sanctuary hoping for dream of divine revelation. Within the famous dream, God asked Solomon for his heart’s desire. “Wisdom,” was his answer. Notice that wisdom had the power to deliver many of the mundane desires into Solomon’s hands anyway (riches, honor, long life, etc.). But wisdom was far more. It was a virtue that brought the king closer to God. For only God can give true wisdom. And God gave the young king the virtue of wisdom in abundance. How could wisdom help you in your growth to God? In seeking God’s wisdom, how might FCC become a place of blessing for others in the name of God? Who do you know that might need the kind of blessing FCC can offer?

Prayer: May we seek your wisdom in all areas of our life, O God, and may we live in your wisdom to become a blessing for others. Amen.

