

*Monday, February 9*

As we begin reflecting on our lives and take just a moment out of our schedules to listen to what God might say to us, we begin on a journey anew. That journey takes us to the Scriptures and back to the core of our lives. I believe many who are listening today need a fresh encouragement from God. Something that God will speak to us, something that we cannot speak to ourselves.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams... (Acts 2:17f., where Peter quotes Joel 2:28ff.) This is Peter quoting the prophet Joel, telling us God is now with us by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which is true for every believer. This is also why we usually read this passage at Pentecost. But I want to look at this passage through a different perspective: That really this is a call to dream again.

Many of us have been squashed by life. We have been crushed in our relationships with our parents, with our siblings, with our spouse, with our co-workers, with fellow students, with neighbours. Our lives have been hard, and depending on how long this has happened to us, we tend to become depressed, or bitter, or sarcastic or cynical, because life has not been as kind to us as we would have liked.

Or maybe our relationships have gone reasonably well, but our health has failed us. Many of us suffer chronic health problems, with minor and major pain that simply does not go away.

Others of us may have experienced reasonably good relationships and reasonably good health, but our lives have not turned out the way we expected or wanted. We never got the job we expected to get, or the opportunity to make a difference in the community that we thought we might be able to make.

So we have many losses, and many dreams that have never come to pass. Have you thought lately about your dreams? Now, I'm not referring to your

night narratives that most of us have most of the time. I'm thinking about your vision for your life, for what you'd like to become or what you had hoped to do, or what you still have had dreams about, the exciting possibilities that lay before you.

Now, for many of us, those seem to have disappeared. Some of us even question why we are still here. But what I'd like to suggest to you today is: What are the dreams that you have for your life? May I be so bold as to say: Dare to dream again.

How might you be God's friend and partner in this community? Whether you're long past the three score and ten (70 years of age) or long before it, it's not too late to dream again.

This week I want to look at some dreams we might have for our lives...I hope you'll want to join us each day, as we dream again together.

Let us pray. O God, help us to recover and even experience the resurrection power of you causing us to dream again, to hope again, to experience the fullness of life. We trust you in 2009 for surprising encounters with you and your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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*Tuesday, February 10*

This week, while we are acknowledging that we have hurts, losses and my kinds of heartache, yet God encourages us to dream again. What are those dreams and visions that you have had for your life? What particularly are the dreams and visions that will build up the community and change others and yourself for the better?

I encourage you to dream big dreams again, or even for the first time. There is a verse in Genesis 11, which is right in the middle of the story of the Tower of Babel, where God makes a confession. It's not a confession of sin, because God doesn't sin, but it is a confession about what we humans are able to do, whether for good or for evil.

God says, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, (this being the construction of the tower that ‘reaches to the heavens’), then they nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.”

Pause, a moment, did you get that? Nothing we humans plan will be impossible for us. So that is God speaking, and that is why I encourage you to dream big dreams, for good, for God.

One of my dreams is for the church, and I’m not sure whether you would consider this a big dream or not. I’ve daydreamed a few times about a church that would be full of my friends who currently live all across North America and the world. We would care for one another, challenge one another, reach out to those who are hurting, and enjoy every time we met together as if it were the last time.

Most of all, my dream is for the Church, that it would be a place of honesty and safety. Now don’t hear me wrongly. I’m not saying that the Church is mainly an unsafe place for liars to hang out. What I am saying is that my dream for the church is it will become more and more a place where people feel safe enough to tell their real story, no matter how painful. And in the midst of that telling, people will truly listen. And in the midst of that listening and possibly weeping together, we might in some new way experience the healing power of God.

So many of us have so many losses, yet we still tend to put on our happy faces and our best clothes to cover up that dying inside. I believe as we cultivate an environment in our homes and relationships which allows us to be real with one another, we can then also bring that same reality into the church, along with our brokenness, our neediness and the stuff about ourselves that we tend to hide because we’re not sure how others will react to us if we really told them what we’re really going through.

How would you like to go to a church that has that kind of honesty and caring for one another? It may sound scary, or attractive. But it is a dream that we might be able to be ourselves with one another, and not play anymore at being something we are not.

What are your dreams for the church? I've only mentioned an internal hope for the institution of the church, what dreams do you have for the church in terms of its outreach? How can you become a part of making that dream a reality? God is very much for you as you dream for God. Let's dare to dream again.

Let us pray. Help us hear You, O Lord, as we seek to realize the dreams that You have whispered in our ears for our lives. Allow us the courage to dream again with the dreams that You have put in our hearts. Give us the honesty to acknowledge where we have given up, and rekindle hope in the core of who we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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*February 11*

We are spending a few moments everyday this week allowing God to rekindle some of our dreams. Yesterday I mentioned some of my dreams regarding the church. Today I'd like to take a bit of time to share some of my dreams for our country. What are your dreams for Canada? Today is a good day to ask the Lord to rekindle your dreams for our country, or perhaps to give you a new dream for our country.

We've spent time as a family now in six provinces. Originally I came from California, where some of you might rather be at this time of the year. I started my graduate studies in Vancouver and I met a woman who I eventually married who grew up in St. John's. She was living in Quebec City at the time and working there in the university hospital. We were married in Quebec City in the old city, then lived in Vancouver, Western Quebec near Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver again, Saskatoon, Cornwall, Ontario, Nelson, BC in the mountains and Armstrong, BC in the Okanagan and now here in St. John's. There will be a test at the end of the broadcast to see if you can remember the order of our moves. No, but one thing I have noticed is that everyone in this great big country of ours, yes, I'm a Canadian now, everyone feels alienated from their government.

In Quebec, there's a sense of a distinct society that they have, distinct culture, distinct linguistic pattern, something like what I hear lots of Newfoundlanders say is true about here. There's a sovereignty movement to make that point, just as there is here. On the prairies, they feel the federal government doesn't understand farmers and their contribution to the nation. I've also heard that from our time in Quebec and Ontario. I've also heard that in BC. In BC they say that they are so far west that people can't even remember they are there and that the political will stops at the Rocky Mountains. And in the Atlantic provinces, the federal government doesn't respect us nor hear us the way we need to be heard.

To be honest with you, I've heard the same thing in both official languages across every province we've lived in, and also in Alberta where some of my wife's family has lived in both Calgary and Edmonton. The government doesn't understand the oil industry and has taken huge amounts of money from the province without caring about the province in return. Does that sound familiar?

So what's my point? Today as we consider what makes us a country, we have more in common with one another than we think. We feel the other parts of the country don't understand us, and they don't. But they feel the same way.

So what do we do? We remember our national motto: "ad mare a mare" which means "from sea to sea" which is the Latin translation of a portion of a verse from Psalm 72:8, and He (the King) will have dominion from sea to sea...

We remember that we are called to love God and to love our neighbour. And I dream of neighbours getting to know each other and helping each other as some of you have experienced here. There is and has been more of a sense of neighbors helping neighbors here, more than elsewhere, but still not everyone's experience here.

I encourage you to ask the Lord, or simply to ask someone you care about how you might reach out to your neighbour, help with the snow, help with something. And at least offer to help.

That's my little dream for our country. It starts with our neighbours.

Let us pray. Lord, you have given a nation that has wonderful resources and beauty. We have so much, O God. Help us to be thankful for what we already have, but at the same time to reach out to others with what you have given us, O God. Thank you, in Jesus' name.

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*February 12*

We've been looking at God restoring our dreams and visions this week. Many of us have gone through such difficulties and many painful experiences that cause us to go into survival mode, rather than a hopeful, expectant, passionate, caring, place we may have once experienced.

So we look to God, with the help of one another to restore our dreams and visions for life. What dreams and visions does God want to restore in your life?

Maybe it is in the area of creativity. Perhaps you enjoyed music at one time in your life. Now, no matter what stage of life you are in, you can take up music again. Maybe it simply means singing again, or humming again, or whistling again. I would encourage you to sing again God praises and thanksgiving, as you are able. These words can have a healing effect on our souls and our bodies.

Perhaps you enjoyed art at one time in your life. Now, no matter what stage of life you are in, you can take up art again. Maybe it simply means getting some appropriate paper, paint and brushes. I've enjoyed even using my fingers for painting. And it doesn't have to be kindergarten type finger painting. Many famous painters used their digits to paint with extraordinary effect. The painting can be realistic or can be abstract. The colours in themselves can have a healing effect. Even considering how the light effects us and our world can have a calming and peaceful effect on us.

Perhaps you enjoyed photography. It might be a time to get a digital camera and try out something new. With not having to get film, the costs associated with seeing the pictures is very low. Of course, computers give us another place to pursue art and photography. While there is much evil on the internet, there is also much beauty.

It is not surprising that the areas of art and music can be a healing place for us who have lost our dreams and are just getting by. God is the ultimate Creator, and we are made in God's image. So something happens as we participate in creating, something beyond us. Perhaps this is why art work often takes on a life of its own, and its value in some instances goes to astronomical amounts.

As we regain our dreams for our lives, God does something beyond us. Some of our dreams may seem to be simply for ourselves. Some of our dreams draw us closer to God and to the community.

Let's continue to ask God for those dreams that will change us for the better. Again, no matter what stage of life we are in right now, God wants to continue our growth in grace, our growth in love and for us to be a positive agent for change in our community.

I hope you agree with this. We constantly experience opportunities for growth. Our families present us with such opportunities everyday. Our co-workers present us with opportunities everyday. So no matter how poor or how wonderful your relationships presently are, you can choose to grow through what you are going through.

If you are experiencing conflict at work, or at home, or in your neighborhood, ask God for a fresh perspective and a way to make the situation better than you have not yet seen. Perhaps God will creatively intervene, even go before you as you seek to dream again.

May God bless you as you look for God's ways in our hurting world.

Let us pray. Help us, Lord, as we seek to know you anew today. Help us, Lord, as we risk again that little bit of hope which might be a lifeline of

grace to ourselves and others. As we creatively respond to You and Your ways, grant us new life again, and a fresh start, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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*February 13*

While Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> signals something foul and sinister to many in the culture, we choose to turn to the Lord for a moment, to regain our hope, our dreams, our vision. We've been looking this week at how God might do that very thing. Has God helped you reconsider your dreams, your hopes, your visions? What kinds of things does God want to do in your life to this end?

First of all, God reminds you of His love for you. Love is the fuel that keeps us going. Love keeps us thankful for what we have, and reminds us of what we have lost. Today the Ocean Ranger service reminds us that love, even lost love carries us a long ways.

You know the Bible passage on love that we so often read at Wedding celebrations from 1 Corinthians 13: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trust, always hopes, always perseveres.

In our relationships, we rarely taste the depth of this kind of love, let alone give it away. Patience and kindness, without envying and boasting and pride, seeking others' well being before our own, not keeping score, not becoming angry but rather protecting, trusting, hoping, persevering. This kind of love comes from above, from God. But most of us at some time have been pretty beat up and a lot of us have stopped looking for this kind of love, because we are afraid to trust and risk again.

All relationships are built on trust and risk continually occurs as we give ourselves to one another. I'm saying this in part because tomorrow is February 14<sup>th</sup>, which has for some reason been attached to love. We take a



moment to appreciate those around us who love us. We take a moment to show our love in some relatively creative way to those most special in our lives.

Perhaps tomorrow can also be a time to reconnect with God. To say to God that we love Him. We know that God is not after chocolates, flowers or other gifts. But God is longing to connect with our hearts, with the core of who we are. He already knows who we are, but our connecting with Him brings us back into connection with ourselves. So maybe do a little love card up for God. Share it first of all with God, then with someone you care about. Does that sound strange?

The God who created us and created love is as touched as any parent who receives an art work from her or his child. Let's reconnect with the One who gives us love and a fresh start. Let's take the time to enjoy that love, the peace and safety involved in that love, and a new sense of purpose that comes as we dream again.

It's been good to be with you this week. My name is Jonathan Dent, and I'm the Minister at St. David's Presbyterian Church. Thank you for spending some time with me.

Let us pray. Lord, help us to seek You for a renewed sense of life and purpose here in this city. Help us to know your love and hope anew. Help us to dream again. And as we do, reveal your great love to us, and help us to reflect that love to others, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.