

“Choice #3: Choose to Dream Boldly”

(Mark 10: 32-45)

Maybe it was the gleaming and almost glaring metallic red paint in which I could see my smiling reflection. Maybe it was the idea that you could actually sleep on the job. Maybe it was the shiny brass pole that seemed so much cooler than the stairs I had to use at my house. Maybe it was the sensory overload of the siren wailing; echoing off the concrete walls at an ear numbing pitch while the red strobe light nearly blinded my kindergarten class with every half turn. But, there was **no doubt** in my six year old mind, that when I grew up, I wanted to be a firefighter. I raced home, told my parents, who got out my baby book, on the line underneath cowboy, and added fireman to the list of my dream jobs. I would soon learn about climbing ladders high into the sky, which given my fear of heights dampened my enthusiasm for firefighting profession. Later, I would discover that you actually had to go *inside* the burning house and not just stay safely beside the hose. And as my adventurous spirit gave way to practical instincts, soon the dream of being a firefighter was replaced with less riskier and most gravity accepting professions. This morning, I want you to turn to your neighbor and share what your earliest childhood dream job was that you can remembering, what is the first job you can recall thinking to yourself, ‘that sounds so cool.’

Our hopes and our dreams are an insight into our souls. Our hopes and our dreams take us to the edge, the very boundaries of what we believe is possible and achievable. Our hopes and our dreams say more about us than the usual surface level conversation fodder about the weather or the Packers or our take on the latest Dan Brown book, Disney movie or Armory show. Because sharing our dreams involve vulnerability and reveal so much, this is probably why at some point in the maturation process we start to internalize and keep those hopes and dreams to ourselves. Sometimes, around friends, we might share our hope to get a new big screen t.v. or have a church member donate one to you; or your spouse every year around her birthday subtly works into every dinner table conversation her dream to go skydiving; or you might even experience a slip of the tongue when you tell a close friend how much fun it would be to own your business; or you might tell a friend you’d love to travel overseas. But upon seeing a surprise look in response most of us will quickly shrugging our shoulders, sheepishly comment about the ‘current economic state of affairs’ or laughingly say ‘well not at my age’ all the while reminding ourselves to watch what we say.

Dreaming boldly, passionately, and even outlandishly about the seemingly innumerable places and directions our lives could go in the unknown, wide open space of tomorrow is often reserved for those moments when we find ourselves alone staring out the window at the leaves blowing in the autumn air and we find our own internal restlessness stirring as well. Choosing to dream boldly is exactly what James and John do in our scripture reading this morning. On the heels of the third time in Mark’s gospel where Jesus predicts his passion; for the third time Jesus tries to tell his closest friends that in just a few more miles when they enter Jerusalem everything they think they know about the Messiah will be turned on its head. Life is about to get chaotic and confusing and overwhelming. And upon hearing this for a third time the disciples still cannot or will not wrap their minds around this foreshadowing of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Still trapped by conventional notions of who a Messiah was and what a Messiah should do (namely overthrow the Romans, restore the self rule and allow the Jewish people to regain their freedom), James and John ask for preferential treatment. After all, they were the third and fourth to respond to Jesus’ call to

follow, and might have been first if Jesus had just stopped by their boat earlier. They were there from the beginning, didn't they deserve a reward? They trudged down more dusty roads, had to do more crowd control, and listen to more sermons, than some of these other Johnny Comelatelys who were now hanging around; shouldn't that count for **something**?

Did you also catch that this request might not just be about power or prestige or place in line, but about fear? We are told anxiety hung like an ominous cloud above the disciples' heads, they were afraid. Afraid that with each step toward Jerusalem what they hoped following the Messiah would be all about **would not** come to fruition. Afraid that what Jesus was saying about picking up the cross and even dying to discover the life that is true life might just be the only path. James and John were afraid that if they might miss their window of opportunity as they inched ever closer to Jerusalem and somewhere deep in their gut, I think they understood that something transformative and life-changing was about to happen.

Fear is a real emotion that controls many a life. Fear of failure in our jobs keep our bodies moving forward even when fatigue and exhaustion weigh heavily on our shoulders. Fear of not being able to pay the bills keeps us going to jobs that frustrate us. Fear of loneliness keeps us in unhealthy relationships. Fear of the unknown can keep us clinging to rituals and structures that long, long ago lost their meaningfulness and usefulness. Unfortunately, for some, even fear of God can keep them coming back to church week after week. But fear only takes you so far. At least for me, when the shadows of fear seep into my mind and start to pull the strings of my life, I become less creative. When fear drives me, I become more easily exhausted. When fear is what motivates my actions and words, I get boxed into ways of thinking and being that feels distant from the One who loves me and claims me and invites me to **not be afraid** but to choose to dream and dream boldly.

Choosing to dream boldly means that we will step outside the comfortable confines of our snug and secure boxes where we think we are in control and instead move into an invisible but unfailing grace of God. Choosing to dream boldly means that we set aside that timid, just dip the very tippy-top of our toe in to test the temperature of the water selves and instead leap into the river of life hand-in-hand with the One who loves us. To choose to dream boldly is perhaps the most crucial choice facing the church today. When the community of faith is unable to dream, to share their wildest hopes for what we can be as the living body of Christ today, then we've lost something that is vital to our faith. How often in the Scriptures does God choose to speak through dreams? Jacob, Joseph of the Technicolor dream coat fame, Samuel, Joseph of the journeying on a donkey to Bethlehem with pregnant Mary fame, whatever day-dream like state Paul was in as he went down road to Damascus, and even Peter while on a roof top struggling with the direction of his ministry; dreams are woven into scripture. Dreaming boldly is what the church is all about. What stops and stymies us in the church from sharing and acting on our dreams is not all that different than that which stops and stymies us in our individual lives: money, not wanting to create conflicts in our relationships, the reality that we might not fully live out our dreams, and so we stay put in what we know. Choosing to dream boldly, friends, is the third choice; after we choose today and after we choose to fill other's buckets with the love of God. I also think dreaming boldly is another layer of being a faithful steward. If you are going to offer your time, your talents, and your treasure to the church (to our church), what that moment is really all about is investing in the dreams and in the future of being the body of Christ. When you fill out your intention of giving card or sign up to be liturgist or greet or serve coffee or come in to help put together *Tower Notes*, or attend Bible Study; all those actions come with dreams

whether we name them out loud or in the still small silence of our hearts. Choosing to dream boldly means that we will step out, trusting in the grace of God. Each person here today carries a dream or several dreams for our community. Inside your heart, roaming around your mind, or stirring in your soul is a hope, a vision, what you hope will happen, what you pray you will witness and be part of in our on-going, unfolding life together in the days, weeks and months to come. Our dreams, your dreams are vital and need your voice so they can escape from the confines inside you into the light of life when we speak our dreams to another. Let us, friends, be a church that dreams boldly. Let us be a community that trusts in God who delights in dreams. Let us be a place where we share our dreams and through prayerful conversation find places where we sense the Spirit guiding us to live out a few of those dreams. Because my dream for 2010 is that the spirit that stirred at our dessert first meetings will keep on swirling. My dream is that we will find ways to talk openly with each other. My dream is we will keep on striving to worship with gusto, serve with love in this community, and connect with the One whose presence makes all the difference.

So, friends, choose today and receive the gift of the present. Choose to fill a bucket and share the sacred love of God. Choose to dream boldly that our lives, our light, our presence as individuals and as the community of Christ matters and makes a difference in our lives, in Janesville, and in the world. Thanks be to God and let the people of God say, "Amen!"