

Year B: First Sunday of Advent

Scripture references: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147; Galatians 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

December 20, 2020

St. David's Episcopal Church

9.15 am livestream

The Rev. Emily Zimbrick-Rogers

### Those Who Dream

Like many of you, my family and I watched the film *White Christmas* this week, with the iconic lyrics of I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones I used to know.

I've been pondering that idea of dreaming. What are our personal dreams? Our collective dreams? Of sorrow, of fear, of peace, of hope, of love?

Another World War II song captured the feeling of the nation separated from their loved ones, also sung by Bing Crosby—I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.

This is a reality for many people around the world—the dream of being with their family for their most holy days, but unable to gather. Many years people are prevented from seeing their loved ones due to forced migrations, jobs with no vacation, closed borders, military service. Two good friends of mine, both mothers with small children, are deployed this Christmas. Many more people this year could not travel to be with their loved ones due to the virus. For so many, the hope and longing of being together remained just a dream.

Both in the Bible and in our contemporary understanding of psychology and spirituality, dreams have so many purposes—to show us our hopes and our fears, to escape difficult realities, and to help us envision a more hopeful future, like the dreams of Isaiah the Old Testament prophet and of Martin Luther King Jr. the modern prophet. A dream of our nation putting into reality our creed that all people are created equal ... a dream that children will be judged by their character, not their color. A dream that Isaiah's prophesies we read about today would be made a reality—the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people shall see it together.

In this time of fearful dreaming, of waking up to understand broken systems of society, in times of social isolation and collective anxiety, I've found that logical explanations and pat answers don't really speak to people. In this unusual year, I've found that music and art can better get to the heart of our longings, dreams, and prayers. Creativity helps us see—and then work together for a hopeful future.

So I would like to share a music video that captures so much of what I've been pondering in this Advent and Christmas season. This song is written by a musical group called The Many, and the art and video is made by the arts collective, A Sanctified Art. This song gives us a window into what entering into God's dream can look like for us—and invites us to follow those who have dreamed God's dreams. (3 min)

Song played—"Those Who Dream" (Can be seen in the livestream video)

It's time to dream fierce dreams, like Mary did. Mary accepted the word of the angel and said yes to the Holy Spirit.

It's time to dream brave dreams, like Joseph did. Joseph was told in two dreams to follow God's invitation, rather than the normal expectation of a man in his setting.

It's time to dream new dreams, like Jesus did.

The new dreams of Jesus are making a reality the dreams people have been having for centuries—for peace, for love, for restoration of relationships, for bringing hope to who dwelling in darkness and sitting in the shadow of death.

In the Bible, we see many dreams—some of which have taken place and some of which we still look to the future to be made into reality. Our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah is all about the dream of God making all things right, when all is transformed for good, when salvation is shared with the entire world.

As the psalm says, the Lord heals the brokenhearted and binds up the wounded—this is both a reality that God does this, but also a dream because in this broken world, it is not fully accomplished.

Our Gospel reading today says that in Jesus was life and the life was the light of all people. And in both our Gospel and our epistle, the dream of being God's beloved child is a reality Jesus ushers in—and invites us into.

Yet it's so hard because being God's Beloved children seems at times more like a dream than a reality. We see brokenness in ourselves and in our world, we hope for a better future for our children and all of God's creation. We hope and dream that

2021 will be better for us than 2020, both individually and for our country and our world.

Yet we still hear of people dying, people hungry and unstably housed, immigrants separated from their families, racism and violence that takes away lives and hope. People living in Wayne and in Uganda experiencing the same things like loneliness and depression.

As the song says, dreams start in the dark. The Isaiah passage affirms this, seeds grow in the dark before they can spring up to be visible by our eye. Hope is born in the dark, but don't give up.

It's time to dream fierce dreams, brave dreams, new dreams. Because these dreams help us imagine and work for a better future. Alice Walker wrote, "Look closely at the present you are constructing: it should look like the future you are dreaming."

What are you dreaming about at the start of this year? What was Jesus dreaming about? How can our dreams and Jesus' dreams come more and more into line, so our dreams are not just about us, but about caring for the dreams of those most in need of hope and a future.

Let us pray—and dream and work—today and every day, to take this light given to us in Christ and shine it forth in our lives and help to bring about the healing of the world. Because those who dream God's dreams change everything. Amen.