

Sponsored by Belle Vernon Area Ministerium  
at Fells United Methodist Church

“When Dreams Seem Far Away“

Scriptures: Genesis 37:5-8,19-26; 39:19; 41:37-41

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Congratulations to each of you and to all the graduates of 2024. You have run the race, and now that you have finished this one, you'll find another leg on the journey to pursue. Dreams are wonderful things—unless they are nightmares! But even if a nightmare occurs, it doesn't have to be the end of the dream.

Do you have a dream? Joseph did! In fact, the dream was given to him by no one else but God. It would seem, however, that he didn't have much sense when he shared with his brothers that, one day, he would rule over them. His dream caused anger and even hatred on his brothers' part toward Joseph. So much so that they sold him into slavery, lied to their father about his death, and went on with their lives. But God had a plan.

Joseph was betrayed by his master's wife in Egypt and placed in prison, but still he believed in God. Joseph was forgotten by Pharaoh's cup bearer and left in prison, but still he believed in God. Finally, when the Pharaoh could not interpret his own dream, he called Joseph out of prison, and, because of his faith in and relationship with God, Joseph interpreted the dreams and was placed in charge of all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Dream fulfilled.

Too often, when we have a dream, a goal, a plan, we look at it as an all or nothing arrangement—that any speed bump on the course, any temporary detour, is a sign that we just can't succeed, that we will never be anything but what we are right now. No matter what the success we have experienced to this point, when the resistance or struggle appears, we give up on the dream, rather than looking to God and seeking God's plan for us.

“Alexander the Great conquered Persia, but broke down and wept because his troops were too exhausted to push on to India.

“Hugo Grotius, the father of modern international law, said at the last, "I have accomplished nothing worthwhile in my life."

“John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the U.S.--not a Lincoln, perhaps, but a decent leader--wrote in his diary: "My life has been spent in vain and idle aspirations, and in ceaseless rejected prayers that something would be the result of my existence beneficial to my species."

“Robert Louis Stevenson wrote words that continue to delight and enrich our lives, and yet what did he write for his epitaph? "Here lies one who meant well, who tried a little, and failed much."

“Cecil Rhodes opened up Africa and established an empire, but what were his dying words? "So little done, so much to do."

*Donald McCullough, "The Pitfalls of Positive Thinking", Christian Times, September 6, 1985.*

It is possible that you don't yet have a dream, that you aren't sure what you want to do with your life, much less know what God wants to do with you, and that's okay. Life isn't a one-and-done experience, but a lifetime of transformation, redirection, and triumphs—interspersed with hiccups and setbacks. I want you to remember today, the words of Philippians 1:6, from the Amplified Bible: “I am convinced and confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]. This promise, this assurance is for you, for all of you, encouraging us to continue to look up and to allow those challenges to make us better, stronger, and better prepared for what God wants to do in and through each of us.

It started like so many evenings. Mom and Dad at home and Jimmy playing after dinner. Mom and Dad were absorbed with jobs and did not notice the time. It was a full moon and some of the light seeped through the windows. Then Mom glanced at the clock. "Jimmy, it's time to go to bed. Go up now and I'll come and settle you later."

Unlike usual, Jimmy went straight upstairs to his room. An hour or so later his mother came up to check if all was well, and to her astonishment she found that her son was staring quietly out of his window at the moonlit scenery. "What are you doing, Jimmy?" "I'm looking at the moon, Mommy." "Well, it's time to go to bed now." As one reluctant boy settled down, he said, "Mommy, you know one day I'm going to walk on the moon."

Sometime later, that same boy in whom the dream was planted that night would survive a near fatal motorbike crash that broke almost every bone in his body. Did he give up? No, through his dedication and holding on to the dream, he brought to fruition this dream 32 years later when James Irwin stepped on the moon's surface, just one of the 12 representatives of the human race to have done so? *Source Unknown.*

When God gives us a dream, a plan, a calling, we might not understand it. As a young girl, I sensed God's call to ministry, but the avenues for such a thing weren't open to me. Several years later, having given up on what I thought was my calling, I once again called on God and rededicated my life, my talents, and all that I had to God's purposes, whatever they might be. I could never have dreamed of the life I have today, of the experiences (good and bad) that I have had, or of the joy of finding God's purpose in my life.

"The year was 1920. a young man named Oswald Smith was standing before the missionary board. He had one dream— to be a missionary. Over and over again, he prayed, "Lord, I want to go as a missionary for you. Open a door of service for me." Now, at last, his prayer would be answered. When the examination was over, the board turned Oswald Smith down. He did not meet their qualifications. He failed the test. Oswald Smith had set his direction, but now life gave him a detour. What would he do? As Oswald Smith prayed, God planted another idea in his heart. If he could not go as a missionary, he would build a church which could send out missionaries. And that is what he did. Oswald Smith pastored The People's Church in Toronto, Canada, which sent out more missionaries than any other church at that time. Oswald Smith brought God into the situation, and God transformed his detour into a main thoroughfare of service". *Brian L. Harbour, Rising Above the Crowd.*

The disciples followed Jesus for three years. They saw miracles, healings, multitudes believe in Jesus. They believed that Jesus was the Savior for whom they had been looking, but then, one auspicious Friday, Jesus was crucified. Their dreams were dashed. Their hopes were demolished. But Sunday came, and everything changed. And today, several thousand years later, we are in this place following that same Savior, and the Church continues, in spite of the world's challenges.

What is your dream? Don't let go! Do you sense a purpose for your life? Give it to God and let God give you back the dream in greater measure than anything you could imagine for yourself. Not sure where to go or how

to go about achieving your dream? Ask God for wisdom, and God will guide you. Discouraged because others think you could never reach your goal? Turn it over to God in prayer, and God will show you wonderful things.