

“Let’s Dream in 2017” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
January 1, 2017 First Sunday after Christmas Day
Matthew 2: 13-23

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Dreams. Matthews story of Jesus and his parents involve several dreams. Dreams, messages from God, guided the young family on their way. In fact, there are five dreams in chapters one and two.

Matthew uses dreams to show us how God guided Jesus’ family through some treacherous waters. Through dreams, we see God’s plan for keeping Jesus safe so Jesus could complete the task that God had sent him to do – to show us in person what God is like and through Jesus’ death and resurrection, reveal God’s plan for our salvation.

What other Old Testament character had dreams? That’s right, Joseph, who dreamed that his brothers would bow down to him. When he told his brothers his dream they sold him to passing travelers who eventually took him to Egypt where his ability to interpret dreams got him a really good job – that of overseeing Egypt’s grain stores during a multi-year drought. You may remember the rest of the story. Because of what had happened to Joseph his family was saved from starvation.

Joseph, as in Mary and Joseph, and Joseph whose brothers sold him into slavery - both had dreams. Same name and both dreamers. For Matthew, the connection is intentional. Matthew was writing for Hebrew audience. He wanted to relate the story of Jesus’ birth using allusions the reader would understand. God’s guidance through dreams would remind the reader of Joseph’s dreams that guided his family to safety in a drought. Matthew goes further. Jesus’ family trip to Egypt and return would remind the Hebrew reader of Moses and his early life and then the exodus from Egypt back to Israel. Matthew wants his readers to clearly understand that Jesus is the Messiah. This he states in verse 18 of chapter 1 and then goes on to prove that Jesus is the Messiah as he tells the story of Jesus’ life in the rest of the book of Matthew.

What’s amazing to me is that Joseph and the Wise Men acted on their dreams immediately. They trusted the dream was from God and acted immediately.

You don’t need to raise your hand, but have any of you had a dream where God gave you a message? I hope you are open to dreams in which God provides you with direction. God communicates with people who are open to listening.

I had my annual physical on Thursday and the doctor asked what I was preaching on. When I told him about my sermon on dreams he immediately related to me what his pastor had said to him about God speaking to him. His pastor said that God is trying to communicate with each of us all the time. We are just not listening. His pastor said that though we may get frustrated that we don’t hear from God, God is trying to communicate, but we’re just not listening.

For the skeptics in the audience today, the Bible does have something to say about dreams and God using them to communicate with you and me. Joel 2: 28 says: **Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.** Job believes we are confronted with God’s voice whether we hear it or not. Job 33: 14-16: **For God speaks in one way, and in two, though people**

do not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals, while they slumber on their beds, then he opens their ears,

I bring up dreams as we begin a new year, because this is the year – especially for all of you who attend this church – this is an important year to be tuned into God. Whether God communicates with you in dreams or through other people or those thoughts that just pop into your head, you and I should always be listening for God’s direction in our lives. But this year it is vitally important that all of us do listen. More on that in a moment.

Back to dreams. Dreams can come from God or they can come from Satan. The Evil One is aware that visions and dreams can influence people. So it’s best to ‘test’ to see if the dream or vision is from God. How can you do that?

First, pray to God to see what God wants to teach you from the dream. I had a vivid vision once which puzzled me. My mentor told me to ask God to reveal what God wanted me to know or learn from the vision. If you have a vivid dream and you’re not sure what God is saying to you, pray about it asking God to reveal the teaching in the dream.

Second, listen for God’s response to your prayer. This means you need to provide time in your busy life to listen. God will answer the prayer and provide the explanation.

Third, write down what you remember from the dream. I have a pastor friend who has written a book on dreams and how God speaks through them. He conducts several dream groups. His advice. Write down all you can of the dream. These details will help you be specific in your prayers to God. You can also write down what God tells you in the answer to your prayers about the dream. Having a written record helps you to see God’s hand in your dreams. Note: if, after praying you feel the dream is not from God, forget about it.

Fourth, talk to a godly, mature Christian about your dream. I call that double checking! Two people praying and discussing are better than going it alone. Be careful though, about who you talk to. Too many people want to leave God out of dream interpretation. Find a Christian who believes that God is still speaking to us today.

I mentioned there’s a very important reason that all of us in this church need to especially be listening for God’s guidance this year. I say that because our church is involved in the New Beginnings process. The New Beginnings process enables a church to set a course that best reflects its strengths and the passion of those who attend that church. Part of the process is listening to what God has to say about where God wants to lead the church.

Each of you will be offered an opportunity to participate in a small group where we’ll gather your input on the future direction for this church. By listening to what God has to say to you, each of you, about the future of this church we will arrive at a God-centered and directed plan for furthering the Gospel through Community Presbyterian Church, Cathedral City.

Joseph’s dreams, which he followed, allowed Jesus to grow and prosper to become our savior. Joseph acted on those dreams. I pray that each of you eagerly seek and share God’s communication to you as we plan for the future of this church in 2017.