

December 18 2016

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 7:10-16

Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon *Having Faith in the Dream*

The definition of a dream is a succession of images, thoughts, or emotions passing through the mind during sleep. Do you dream? Statistics show that it is thought that everyone dreams between 3 to 6 times a night even though some people don't remember dreaming. Dreams can last between 5 to 20 minutes per dream. If you do dream, do you remember what you were dreaming about when you wake up? It is said that 95% of dreams are forgotten by the time a person gets out of bed.

I dream and sometimes the dreams I have are very vivid and not always good. I have had the dreams that wake me up with my heart pounding. I have had dreams that continue after I have fallen back asleep from waking up from the dream. One of the most frequent dreams I have is the one where I am at school or at work and can't find my locker or my desk.

Are your dreams so realistic that you believe that whatever you are dreaming is real? I have to tell a dream story on George. One night he sat straight up in bed and as he did that he took the blankets and flung them off the foot of the bed. Then he began pounding on the bed near his feet. I of course was wide awake by then and asked him what he was doing. He said "I have to get that snake; I have to get that snake." After I got him awake, he told me that he dreamt that a snake had slithered over the top of his foot. One thing you need to know, George REALLY doesn't like snakes. I would say that that dream was very realistic and George believed there was a snake in the bed. In reality what probably happened was as George was dreaming about a snake, my foot must have touched his foot. But to him, the dream was very real.

Now, if you dreamt that someone told you to do a specific thing, would you believe them and do what you were told to do? I would say in most cases you would not do what was told to you to do in a dream. That would be the case for me. It is just a dream after all.

So the point I am getting to with all this talk about dreams, is the passage that was read from Matthew. Joseph and Mary were engaged and in their time, this was a binding arrangement between people who were already considered husband and wife. He finds out that Mary is pregnant, so he assumes she must have committed adultery. The engagement or arrangement could only be dissolved by some type of severe punishment. Being a righteous and just person, he decides to go against what would be expected of him to do and decided out of consideration for Mary to

divorce her quietly. Then an angel comes to Joseph in a dream and tells him that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit and that the unborn child is the son of God, but Joseph is to accept him as his own child and his name is to be Jesus. So Joseph does as he is told to do, and takes Mary as his wife, and the baby as his own.

Joseph had quite a dream and when he woke up he remembered it, and did what he was told to do in the dream. By believing that it was an angel of God talking to him, Joseph's dream paved the way for humankind from that point forward for eternity. Where would we be if Joseph had just ignored the dream and did what he had planned to do, quietly divorce Mary?

Could you do the same? How would we know that it was an angel of God or God himself that was talking to us in the dream? I think that is where our faith in God comes into play. It is not unlike the story of doubting Thomas that Pastor Dwain told us last week. His faith wasn't quite strong enough to believe that Jesus did come back to the disciples. He needed that physical proof; he needed to see the wounds. I think anything is easier to accept or believe if we have something visual relaying the information.

In Hebrews 11:1, there is a clear definition of faith. It reads: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." To put it simply, the biblical definition of faith is "trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove."

This definition of faith contains two aspects: intellectual assent and trust.

Intellectual assent is believing something to be true. Trust is actually relying on the fact that something is true. So picture this. Intellectual assent is recognizing that a chair is a chair and agreeing that it is designed to support a person who sits on it. Trust is actually sitting in the chair. That is a very literal description of faith but I think it works for us to better understand what faith is all about. We can believe in something but for us to act on that something we have to trust in what we believe.

Joseph did just that. He believed what he heard the angel say in his dream and he trusted that what he heard and believed was what God wanted him to do. His faith was strong, thankfully for us. He married Mary and raised Jesus as his own son. As we come closer to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us be thankful for the power of faith that realized what was heard in a dream was to be trusted and not just some crazy dream.

I can't tell you that God will come to you in a dream to help you in any situation but I can't say he won't either. We just need to have enough faith or trust that if that is how God wants to guide us in our lives then it is for real. God is there for us through our joys, our sadness, and our times of tribulation. We just have to have enough faith to believe that it is so. If we aren't sure then we need to pick up the

Bible and read. That is something visual that we can use to help us to have enough faith. After reading the Bible comes prayer, talk to God.

May you go in peace today as we come closer to the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Say a prayer of thanks that Joseph believed what he heard in a dream.

Amen.