

Summer Series: “Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World”

Sermon #4: “Releasing God’s Dream in Me!”

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13 (CEB)

He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip God’s people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God’s Son. God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.

Text: “I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don’t go away, the Companion won’t come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.” -John 16:7 (CEB)

Theme: God’s dream for every follower of Jesus in every local church is that they realize God’s dream for their lives and are released to see the dream fulfilled!

Blurb: Did you know that God has a dream for your life? Are you living into it? What will you do this week to begin to fully realize God’s big dream for your life? Dream, pray, fast and read looking for God’s dream for you. Vital congregations release their people into ministry. How are we equipping and releasing each other into the work of God in the world? In order to release people into world-changing ministry, we first have to invite them in. How are we inviting new people into our church to join us in God’s dream?

Hymn Sing: Pastor David leads, Janet Beckman plays.

Welcome - Pastor David

Welcome - Introductions, Welcome Center

Introduction of Andrew and Amelia Buschena

New web site

Turn off cell phones but like us on Facebook first. Can from our website.

Welcome of Andrew and Amelia Buschena

Andrew is our new Director of Worship and Outreach - combined position!

Grew up on a farm in SW MN, attended college in Sioux Falls

Headed to Princeton, NJ for seminary

Feels called to serve God in a career of ministry, still exploring that

At Princeton, met Amelia. From Detroit area

She also feels a calling on her heart for a career in ministry

Seeing where God will lead

God married, and convinced her to come back to MN

Amelia will be working with the Wesley Foundation at the University of Minnesota doing campus ministries.

They’ve moved into a duplex on the south side of downtown St. Paul this past Monday

They're happy to be in Minnesota and big Vikings fans!

Prayer Shawls & Prayer of blessing.

Songs: “Our God” - Sanctify

“Cornerstone”

“Jesus Paid It All”

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kid's Invited to Kid's Church - Pastor David

Prayers- Wildfire Commissioning

Offering: Sanctify

Opening Video - For the sermon series "Vital"

PP#1: "Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World"

"Releasing God's Dream in Me!"

"I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." -John 16:7 (CEB)

"Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World." "Releasing God's Dream in Me!"
John 16:7, "I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you."

PP#2: *Image from our Community Care program.*

Yesterday morning, our fellowship hall was full of food. The semi trailer had been emptied, and the food gone through, sorted, and placed in organized form. The time came to open the doors. But right before we did that, all of those who came to help, all the volunteers who had come, gathered in a big circle around the room to pray. There were volunteers who had come before 5 a.m. to start the morning. There were others who had just shown up. In the circle were people who had been coming every month to help for over 10 years. In the circle were people who had just shown up to help for the first time that day. There were people from this church, people from other churches, people who went to no church. There were kids under 10, and there were seniors over 80. We made a big circle—I don't know, 30 of us?—all around the tables. The all was full of food. And it was full of people. We stopped to ask that it would also be full of God's Spirit.

That moment was a powerful moment. There had been a lot of hassle, a lot of conversation, details, decisions, rearranging and organizing. But we stopped because it was not just about the food. It was about God's people, coming together, to be released for Kingdom ministry. And as we prayed together, it became about God's food for God's people. We, who had shown up to do some simple tasks, became ambassadors of our God. We served Jesus, we met Jesus, we were Jesus.

PP#3: *Image for God's people being sent on a mission.*

Just a few minutes ago, some people stood up around this room. You extended your hands over them, blessing them, commissioning them, sending them, to be ambassadors of our God. It was a powerful moment. God's people, with a purpose. God's people, sent on a mission. God's people, ambassadors for Jesus.

You are God's people. You have a God-given purpose. God has a plan for you. This week, you are sent. You are sent to serve Jesus, to meet Jesus, to be Jesus.

PP#4: Releasing God's Dream in Me!

1. Jesus could see Pentecost from the Upper Room!

"I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." -John 16:7 (CEB)

It's interesting to me that on the last night Jesus spent with His disciples, He told them that it was good that He was going to leave. While sitting at the table with them, in John 16:7, Jesus says, "I assure you that it is better for you that I go away."

Think about that. Here they had just been spending over three years together. They had left their former lives to follow Him. They believe He is the Messiah. And now He is telling them that He's going to leave them. Then He says that it is far better for them that He does! What? How could that be? What could be better than having Jesus, the Christ, God's Son, Savior, of having God's very presence in a person on earth? What's better than that?

Jesus explains, "If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." The word for Companion is a hard word to translate. It's *paraclete* in Greek. It means the one who comes along side, or comes to your aid. Translations can be Comforter, Advocate, Helper, Companion. If Jesus goes away, then He will send the Holy Spirit to be their companion, who will come along side of them, come to their aid, and be with them all the time.

What could be better than having God in human form, walking on the earth next to you? Having God living with you, next to you, within you, all the time!

Jesus is on a mission in the world. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to set people free, to offer forgiveness of sins, to bring help in times of trouble and need.

What could be better than having Jesus, God's presence, as a person, doing this on earth? Having God's presence, in lots of people, doing this all over the earth!

When Jesus was with His disciples in the Upper Room, He could see that 50 days later, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would come upon them, to be with them, to empower, equip and enable them to carry on His work, God's plan, for the world.

This is what it means to be a vital church. We're a Pentecost people, scattered and sent.

Vital churches changing communities and the world. We're in our summer series, where we're engaging again how Jesus wants us as His church to be vital. Vital: full of life. He is the life. We have the life. How are we to live out this fullness of life? What does living vitally mean?

PP#5: Image of the book Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World

Our church's senior leadership have been reading this book together. The book talks about the five biblical characteristics of vital churches. Last week we learned about the importance of vital leadership - faithful, fruitful, accountable. Today, its about unleashing the Body of Christ, empowered, scattered, sent.

PP#6: Ephesians 4:11-13 (CEB)

"He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ."

Ephesians 4:11-13 “[Jesus] gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip God’s people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God’s Son. God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.”

A vital church is filled with many different people doing many different things. Each have the Holy Spirit’s filling in different ways, but all for the same purpose. The Holy Spirit’s purpose is to equip God’s people for the work of growing the body of Christ, growing it in number, and in maturity, and in unity, and in faith, and in the knowledge of Jesus.

PP#7: Releasing God’s Dream in Me!

1. Jesus could see Pentecost from the Upper Room!

2. Every follower of Jesus has a dream God wants to see realized!

“Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. Certainly the body isn’t one part but many...You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.” -1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27 (CEB)

God has a dream. And God has given His Spirit to dream in each of us. We each have a dream. We’re not just put on this earth to grind through life, trying to survive, make it through. We have a dream, a purpose. And God’s Spirit in us, speaks to our spirits, calling us to a greater calling. We are all missionaries. We have good news to share. We can make a difference in people God has placed around us.

Some of us are missionaries that appear as teachers. Some appear as technicians. Some of us look like bank tellers, some of us look like mechanics. Some of us are disguised as nurses, accountants, project managers. Some of us are disguised as retired. But we are each living the dream!

But that dream is not you out there all by yourself. You’re not called to be, thank God!, the Lone Ranger. Your dream is woven into a bigger dream. Your life is woven into a larger community. 1 Corinthians 12, “Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. Certainly the body isn’t one part but many...You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.” We are woven together into the Body of Christ. We are a vital church. We have the Spirit in us. Each of us has gifts, each has a dream. And we are all part of each other.

PP#8: *Image from Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat, song title, “Any Dream Will Do!”*

Your dream is not independent, alone, solitary. There is something special when we all formed a circle around the fellowship hall, and joined hands, and joined together to serve. There is something special when we commission mission team servants, some going, some staying, all praying and working together. There is something bigger, something more powerful than we can do by ourselves. A life courses through us! It is the church, vital, living, and giving life.

PP#9: Forest Hills United Methodist Church

Love. Grow. Serve.

Our church here is formed around three biblical pillars of vitality. Love - God and neighbor. Grow - maturing in faith, growing in holiness of heart and life. Serve - touching others, making a difference, serving Jesus, meeting Jesus, being Jesus, living the dream! Highly vital congregations equip and release people for Kingdom ministry

PP#10: Releasing God's Dream in Me!

1. Jesus could see Pentecost from the Upper Room!
2. Every follower of Jesus has a dream God wants to see realized!
3. For God's dream in my life to be realized, I have to mature in Christ!

"Although you should have been teachers by now, you need someone to teach you an introduction to the basics about God's message. You have come to the place where you need milk instead of solid food. Everyone who lives on milk is not used to the word of righteousness, because they are babies. But solid food is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil." -Hebrews 5:12-14 (CEB)

Let's go back to that grow piece for a minute. In order for God's dream in my life to be realized, I have to mature in Christ. Where you are right now, God is using you. But God's dream is bigger than you are. God has more in store for you. And so, God is trying to grow you so that you can live into more of that dream.

Don't be caught into that trap of being OK where you are now. It's easy to stay where you are. It's hard to have God grow you. It's uncomfortable, for God takes you out of your comfort zone. It pulls on you, as God is stretching you. Ask yourself, "What could I be doing?" Listen on the inside, "Where are my passions?" "What do I seem to keep noticing?" "What seems to always be happening around me?" That's God's Spirit working in you, calling you to step out, again and again. What work are you doing for God now that you weren't able to before? I'm not necessarily talking about quantity, as some of us find our bodies don't allow us to do what we used to be able to do. I'm talking about areas of ministry that God is pushing you into. It's easy just to keep on doing what you are currently doing. But are you growing, in faith, spiritually, in what God is doing in you? God has given you talents. But then, you are called to invest them.

Hebrews 5:12-14, "Although you should have been teachers by now, you need someone to teach you an introduction to the basics about God's message. You have come to the place where you need milk instead of solid food. Everyone who lives on milk is not used to the word of righteousness, because they are babies. But solid food is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil."

Milk is easy. Solid food not necessarily. The illness you are working through, God wants that to be solid food for you. How will you grow through that? The waiting you are stuck in: that's solid food to grow you. That neighbor you have to go talk to, that person you need to reconcile with, that new leadership role you need to step into: that's solid food to grow you.

PP#11: *Image for Christians being stretched and growing in maturity.*

Growing. Maturing in faith. Growing in holiness of heart and life. You have to invest in so that it pays out. You have to spend the time daily with God, devotions, prayer, Bible reading. You need to be in studies, and sit under teachers, and read new sources. You need to connect with other

Christians, do life together, share your burdens, seek direction, and seek correction. You need to reach out, serve, share your stories, talk about Jesus. Love. Grow. Serve. They're actually all the same thing!

People ask me if they must be a part of a church. The technical answer is no. You don't need to be part of a church to have Jesus, to be saved, to be a Christian. But you do need to be a part of a church if you want to grow! Being a part of a church will grow you. It'll expand your dream, and expand you. You can sit all by yourself and stay just the way you are. Or, you can join into a vital church, and be stretched. What do you need to do, so that God can stretch you?

Vital churches changing communities and the world. Releasing God's Dream in Me! Jesus could see Pentecost from the Upper Room! He sends the Holy Spirit into us, so that we can serve, meet and be Jesus. Every follower of Jesus has a dream God wants to see realized! God has a God-sized dream in you. You were made for something important! But, for God's dream in our lives to be realized, we have to mature in Christ! We have to let God grow us, and willingly seek it. Living the dream!

I want to end with a video—this time, it should work! It's about a church that captured God's dream for it, and grew into it. As you watch it, watch for ways God's spirit is speaking into yours.

Video: #3 from the CD: "Family Fosters 100 Children"

Closing Song: "We Are the Free" - Sanctify

Announcement & Benediction - David

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR JULY 19, 2015

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Sermon #4: “Releasing God’s Dream in Me!”

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13

Opening prayer

Introductions:

Introduce yourself and share something you do regularly that helps you grow spiritually.

Read: John 16:7

1. Jesus says this at the Last Supper. Why is it that Jesus says it is better that He leave them?

Read: Ephesians 4:11-13

2. What is Jesus’ purpose in giving the special callings to His different followers?
3. What is God’s goal? What does this look like in the mature Christians you know?

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27

4. Explain this passage as if to someone who cannot understand it.
5. How are we “parts of each other”?

Read: Hebrews 5:12-14

6. This passage suggests that you can be Christians and remain a baby in faith. What would it look like for a Christian to continue to need milk instead of food? Describe that life.
7. What is the “word of righteousness”?
8. What does it mean to be “trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil.”
9. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?