

"An Expectant Thanksgiving" Mark 9:14-24

A scientist grows weary of hearing about case after case of polio-myelitis, crippling and maiming another child, so he dedicates his life, his work, all his energy and focus to the researching and reaching for what seems by many to be the impossible...his dream of one day discovering a means of inoculation which will immunize children against the mysterious, infectious virus. In time, Dr. Jonas Salk breaks through the barriers and discovers a vaccine and polio becomes a disease of the past.

A young man stands gazing across the Atlantic Ocean, dreaming of what it would be like to cross that large, vast, body of water by air. The dream of an intercontinental flight takes hold of him and pushes and pulls at his heart...his life...until one morning the Spirit of St. Louis takes off for the first successful trans-Atlantic flight.

A 25 year old preacher has a dream, a dream of white and black folks living together with equal rights under the law, a dream that white and black children can run and laugh and play together in the red hills of Georgia; a dream that this country could be a model, for the world, of achieving human rights peacefully. Countless miles marched and years later, Martin Luther King, Jr., begins to see his dream realized as Civil Rights legislation is passed....schools become integrated,...southern black voters are allowed to vote...and years of prejudice begin to give way to affirmation and the recognition of individual human value.

The list could go on and on couldn't it? Men and women who have left their good mark on life. Such lives prompt the question: "Why do some people achieve great things while others achieve little? Why do some people give and get the best and others seem to always miss out? Why do some people succeed in life while others fail?"

The answer is quite simple: They expect to. They expect to succeed...they expect to do great things...they expect the best of themselves and they expect the best from others.

It is a fundamental truth and principle of life that when you focus all your energy and focus your total self, mind, body and soul, on any of life's problems...when you believe in your dreams....when you believe in what you're doing and why...when you believe in yourself and your God given abilities....when you believe that failure is not an option. When you learn to expect and not doubt...things move into the realm of possibility...and obstacles weaken and begin to deteriorate and disappear.

We are defeated in life not because of a lack of ability, but rather because of a lack of whole-heartedness. Results come to those who have the courage and the faith to commit themselves to the desired outcome. Results do not come to those who hold back out of fear...out of doubt...who have reservations.

That's the whole point of the story read from the Scriptures this morning. The father brought his son to be healed. He approached the disciples and asked them if they would hear his son. They tried, but failed. And then Jesus with a strong note of annoyance and disappointment at their unbelief, says: "Bring the boy to me...."

The father says: "Help us, if you can." And Jesus responds: "If YOU can, everything is possible for the person who has faith." As if to say: "Hey look, I know I can, I don't doubt myself for one minute, but what about you...what about your faith? Do you have what it takes to really believe...I mean REALLY believe and trust that your son can and will be healed?"

Life cannot deny itself to the person who gives it his or her all. Dreams can be realized...goals can be reached. Life can be good for us...and if that is true for us as individuals...it is no less true for us as a congregation.

Some here this morning, dream of this church having a strong youth ministry - where every child of every age will come to learn about and know the goodness and greatness of our God....where education and fellowship go hand in hand for each and every child.

There are some here who dream of stewardship...where our programs determine what our budget looks like and not the budget determining what our programs look like.

There are some here who dream of a growing vision and passion for mission and outreach. Where the love of Christ is not just felt within these walls, but is offered in tangible and practical ways to those in our community who need our help.

And there are many others who dream dreams...and the dreams are many. And every one of them can become a reality...if we want them to. If we really want this church to strengthen and expand the reach of its ministry and the vision of its reason for being here in the first place.

If we really want that to happen...if we put our hearts and minds and souls toward the reaching of our dreams... then these things will happen.

"Everything", said Jesus, "is possible for the person who believes...who has faith." And if we expect the best of ourselves and of each other....if we give the best of ourselves to each other....we will get the best in return.

We can expect blessing after blessing.

So be it for us.