

Pentecost 16, Proper 19  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

September 13, 2015  
Rev. Paul Moore

### **Death of a dream.**

A week ago last Thursday Karisse and I were sitting in front of our plate-glass window eating breakfast and watching the birds at the birdfeeder. The hordes of quail had come and wandered off, and the bad boy, the Curve-billed Thrasher came by. Now the Curve-billed Thrasher is not afraid of anyone except an adult quail or a Scrub Jay, so when he came in everyone else left. He sat on the edge of the bird-feeder and spied the grand prize: A piece of peanut! He quickly grabbed in the end of his long beak, and then I saw something happen that I've never seen before. He must have squeezed it a bit too hard, because suddenly it flipped out of his beak and out of sight! Ah, the death of a dream!

Many, many years ago when I was a young man I tried my hand at homesteading in the Amazon Jungle area of eastern Ecuador. My efforts had failed miserably, and Karisse and I were back with my parents on the other side of the mountains regrouping. I remember sharing my disappointment and disorientation with my mother. She shared with me that she had heard a sermon one time called, "death of a Dream." Sometimes, said the preacher, one dream must die so that another one can emerge. It resonated so profoundly with me at the time. My dreams of living in the jungle, of carving out a little piece of heaven, had crumbled into dust. I didn't know which way to turn or what way to go, and I had a wife and an infant son to figure into the mix. Here, then, is my version of the same sermon—The Death of a Dream.

The task of the Holy Dream is to give us a vision of the way we are to live in the Kingdom of God. It opens for us a vision of heaven as it is to be lived on earth, a picture of the Good Life, in all the best senses of "good." We all have such a dream, really. It lives within us, mostly unconsciously, guiding our decisions, informing our actions, giving form and energy to our living. They are built on things we know, things we believe in, and things we've experienced. They are visions of God and the world that we create, along with the Spirit of God, that help us along the journey into the heart of God.

But as such dreams are a product of who we are at a given time in relationship with the Holy Spirit. As I said, there was a time when my dream was to live in the jungle and farm, and have pastors come spend time in quiet retreat. It was partly a product of who I was at the time. But it died.

Why do dreams die? Dreams die when they are insufficient to the task. When we change, or our understanding of things changes, or we have an experience that changes

the way we look at things or think about things, or we come to understand God in a new way the dreams that have informed our living become insufficient to our new reality and lose their luster and their inspirational power. They die because they become untenable, or at least obsolete and less than useful in energizing our living. Our Holy Dreams are ultimately incapable of containing the whole Dream of God. They can only contain our part of it. Clinging to any one of them is an exercise in idolatry, and always in disillusion, for they will always leave us high and dry and wondering where to turn. Insufficient dreams must die in order to make room for bigger, fuller and more accurate dreams, dreams closer to the Dream of God.

This is what happened to me. What I did not know what that I was hearing the next set of nudges toward a life as an ordained minister of the Gospel. I had had inklings before, those quiet moments when you know what you're supposed to do, but I had not seen how to get from here to there, and so I had put them on the back burner. After the death of Chirisi, our homestead on the Aguarico river, those inklings came back more powerfully than before. I still didn't know how to get from here to there, or what the final form of the dream might be, but I knew I could no longer put it on the back burner.

Peter's dream of Jesus' messiah-hood dies a thrashing death in today's Gospel lesson. Jesus angles up to it: "What's the buzz out there about who I am?" A lot of different answers are floating around. "Well, the, who do YOU say that I am?"

And Peter blurts out, "You are the Messiah!" You're the one to restore Israel's sovereignty. You're the Son of David, who will recapture the golden years of the ancient Davidic dynasty. We have high hopes and dreams for you, Jesus!

Good, Jesus is thinking, but you're idea of what it means to be Messiah is all wrong. In all its glory it's an insufficient dream. It cannot contain the Kingdom of God as it is unfolding, and so Jesus says, "Don't tell anyone." And then Jesus talks about losing one's life and finding it. In God death is always the doorway to resurrection. When our dreams die it is to make room for a resurrection, a rising to a new dream, one that more closely dreams with God. One must let go of the insufficient dream in order to be caught up in God's dream.

And there's the rub. Who is dreaming? The dream of the ego will always dream big, but not big enough, for it will always dream in terms of itself. As big as they can be sometimes, including world things like world domination and self-divination, they cannot encompass the dream of God. God's dream is nothing less than the redemption of all creation. Any one ego is too small. Any one little personal dream will be insufficient.

But there is hope. We can get an inkling of what God's dream is. We know that the large picture is redemption. We know that the smaller picture for us is where we live and who we live with.

Dreams are a product of the human element and the divine. What we must do is listen to the Spirit, try together to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church, and let the dream of God arise in us like the Morning Star. What might that dream look like? We know what it probably WON'T look like. It probably won't look like your political party. It probably won't look like your favorite circle of friends. It may not even look like your own private cause or crusade. These are your dreams, and good though they are, they are insufficient. Getting to God's dream is bigger than all of that. Getting to it is going to take some time, it's going to take some talk, and it's going to surprise and delight us!

So let's dream together, shall we? What does it really mean for us to live as a people who seek to live the love of God? Our discussion springs first from our Home Spiritual Life groups, EfM, and other places where we gather to discuss our personal faith stories. It continues over coffee in Coffee Hour and Choir Practice and at our picnics.

I wonder if we need a time set aside to gather as a people to try to dream God's dream for Good Shepherd Church, to let our insufficient dreams die, and reach for the very dream of God?