

This Lenten season, we've been on a journey.

We've been asked to dare to dream again,

and I've heard from some of you that you've been doing just that.

The nicest compliment that Pr. Paul and I have received is that some of you...

have felt like we were speaking directly to you individually.

Of course, we've just said what we felt we were being called to say:

it is the Spirit that has been writing our words on your hearts.

If you've felt a "tingling of the call" this Lent,

that is something only the Spirit of God can do,

so I'd seriously consider taking that call!

As I've said, there's no age limit to this sense of call;

maybe you've felt some dissatisfaction or...

maybe you just know God has something else in mind for you.

Maybe you've been doing what you've been doing to death,

and it's time to move on to the next stage of your life.

"But..." you say, and in this knee-jerk hesitation, you've said a mouthful.

It is these barriers, these "buts" that hold us back,

that prevent us from being all that God intends us to be,

that Pastor Paul and I have been addressing for the last month.

We've talked about letting go of the past so that we can move on to the future,

we've talked about limited vision, of our inability to see G's involvement in our lives,

and we've spoken of getting stuck in comfort zones that cage us:

a cushy prison cell is a poor substitute for the thrilling,

if sometimes uncomfortable adventure that God has in mind for us.

In the Monty Python parody of the Easter story called *The Life of Bryan...*

(which, by the way, I am not recommending for our movie group...

b/c I'm not going to be held responsible for its language or adult content!),

a blind man is healed & then is furious b/c now he has no way to make a living!

In a way, this man is a metaphor for all of us:

we sit wallowing in our self-pity and blindness,

feeling that fate is responsible for our condition,

until we glimpse a way out into a new life of unknown roads...

and quickly shrink back into our safe, dark corners.

And if, heaven forbid, God thrusts us out into the light,

we become furious, petulant children,

like the children of Israel in the desert...

longing for their comfortable life of slavery in Egypt.

We've got to open our eyes even if we're afraid of what we might see;

we've got to get up and walk out into the wilderness...

even if we have no idea of what lies ahead.

Why? B/c Jesus is the light of the world,

and those who choose to walk in darkness never see him.

And, as the prophet Isaiah said,

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.”

You have to leave b/c you won't find the inbreaking/kingdom in your comfort zones.

God is coming in the wild, the unknown, the places of risk; it's that simple.

And what is the greatest risk of walking out into the unknown,

what is the one piece of security and comfort...

that we are most unwilling to surrender to this new adventure?

What, for many of us, is the number one barrier...

to our taking the chance to live out the dreams that God has for us?

I'll give you a hint...it is the one sin that Jesus comes back to again and again:

Greed/Materialism/Love of Money and Possessions.

Of the 7 Deadly Sins (Pride, Sloth, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy, Wrath),

5 concern greed (the desire to acquire):

Pride = lusting after fame

Gluttony = lusting after food

Lechery = lusting after bodies

Avarice = lusting after possessions

Envy = lusting after another's possessions

Jesus said it simply this way: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;

for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

We all know that you cannot serve 2 gods: God and money.

One reason that we cannot allow our possessions to own us is that...

they can become another barrier to our seeking out the dreams God has for us.

For many, they are the primary barrier to daring to dream a new dream.

Financial security is often opposed to Christian risk-taking.

How many of you have heard of Charity Allen? Here's why you haven't.

Charity was called out of HS Spanish class in California by her drama teacher,

who told her of a prime part in the soap opera, Another World.

They'd interviewed 2,000 teenage girls and hadn't found the right one.

Her teacher thought she'd be perfect; she interviewed/got the part.

The casting director looked Charity in the eye and said,

“Get ready! Your life is going to change fast!”

Her 7-member family was to be taken out of their tiny trailer...

(2 bedrooms/1 bath) and moved into a furnished townhouse/NYC.

As a star, she would start at \$15,000 – 20,000 a week (1980's)!

But just as the contract was slid across the table, Charity heard God's voice.

She told director she would not take God's name in vain,

would not pretend to smoke, do drugs, or be sexually involved.

Would not do anything on screen that she would not do in real life.

The contract was taken back from her.

Charity was offered everything most teens dream about (\$, fame, freedom),

but she refused to put aside her principles for material gains.

Today, she is a television host, recording artist and international youth speaker...  
who, in her words, “feels called...

to communicate love, values and hope to a heartbroken generation.”

You see, God had a bigger dream for Charity Allen than the nightmares being played out by  
Brittany Spears, Lindsay Lohan, and Paris Hilton.

And God has big dreams for you, too.

But, like Charity Allen, you might have to walk away from financial security;  
you might have to endure social pressure or even censure...

from your family/friends/peers.

Can you imagine...

how Charity’s family responded when she got back to the trailer that night?

how her friends responded when she got back to school on Monday?

how her peers and teachers in her drama classes responded?

I am convinced that, despite what you see on TV, you don’t have to be stupid to be a Xian.

But I’m afraid you do have to be a little crazy sometimes, at least in the eyes/world.

It was crazy for Abraham to take his son, Isaac up on that mountain,

it was foolhardy for Moses to take an entire nation out into the desert w/o a map,

it was suicidal for David to walk up to Goliath w/ just a slingshot,

it was mad for Jonah to walk into the enemy capital and call for repentance,

it was crazy for Joseph to believe Mary, for Mary to trust God,

for Jesus to love so much that...

he would lay down his life for friends, family, enemies alike;

and it was crazy for his disciples to lay down their lives to tell the world.

We’re probably not being asked to lay down our lives to pursue these dreams G has for us,  
but we are being asked to put our lives on the line.

Discipleship means commitment and risk: we risk ridicule, failure, hard times.

But what is the risk inherent in not answering the call, in staying where we are?

No risk, really...in fact, it’s a sure thing that we will miss our dreams,

miss the sheer joy of using all the gifts God has given us,

miss the satisfaction of a life well spent,

and miss seeing the kingdom of God that is all around us...

if we’d only let Jesus put a little mud and spit in our eyes.

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