

## This Changes Everything

Mark 9:2-9

One of my very favorite stories growing up was by Dr. Seuss: *To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street*. This was a fanciful story about a boy's imagination run wild as he described to his father what he saw on the way home from school. Imagination is a wonderful gift. It enables us to see what is not yet visible toward making it come to pass. Have you ever gone to Disneyworld, especially to EPCOT? The World of Imagination exhibit is a synthesis of the work the Disney Corporation has done for years to encourage, and build a very successful business on, the imagination of children and adults.

Imagination is not always fanciful. It is not necessarily a way to avoid the harsh or even dull realities of life. Sometimes it is the way to touch and see beyond our sight. Sacred imagination is how we see the activity of God taking place around us. It is how that activity helps us see God around and within us. "The danger of not treating the creative imagination with real love is that this involves a rejection of God – or at least of a huge and magnificent dimension of God." (Sara Maitland, *A Big-enough God*, Mowbray, 1995)

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann considers imagination to have been the primary tool of the prophets of Israel. Imagination allowed them to see the possibility of new life for Israel even after exile. It takes sacred imagination to see the Spirit's vision as it shapes our future – to see the dreams of God for us that lie before us and call to us.

The story of the transfiguration represents a seminal moment in the telling of the Jesus' story. From that moment on, it was clear that what Jesus was bringing, though built on the past, was something totally new. The transfiguration of Jesus was one of those moments that changes everything.

The gospels are stories about Jesus and proclamations by believers that Jesus represents God's new dream for humanity. Each gospel is a particular story emphasizing how the author understood Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Mark's gospel was the earliest of the four biblical gospels and served as the basis for Matthew and Luke. Mark's gospel was often seen as reflecting the early traditions, closest to the historical Jesus.

The story of the transfiguration begins, "six days later." So, what happened six days before? Looking back, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Subsequently, he called Peter *Satan* for failing to see the importance of the mysterious and painful path Jesus was walking. Then he addressed the crowd: "Unless you take up your cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple."

Jesus told his disciples, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." (Mark 9:1). Right away, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain of transfiguration where they would witness the kingdom of God come in Jesus.

Jesus' transfigured face shone brightly in a mystical experience. Moses and Elijah, symbolizing the Law and the prophets, appeared and talked with him. They represented God's dream through Israel of an alternative community of justice, freedom from Egyptian slavery, and shalom: blessed to be a blessing to all nations. Peter began to speak "without thinking. [All at once] a light-radiant cloud enveloped them." They heard, "This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him."

The next minute, the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes, seeing nothing but Jesus, only Jesus." God's dream through Israel becomes God's dream through Jesus. From then on it became clear that what Jesus was bringing, though built on the past, was totally new. It was a new heaven and a new earth filled with justice and the possibility of peace for all people. All creation would be included, transformed, and renewed.

Jesus lived during a time of crisis for Israel, the crisis of Roman domination. In times of crisis, dreams get put on hold or forgotten altogether. We tend to lose a sense of who we are and what we ultimately desire. Clearly, our world is experiencing an economic crisis today, an erosion of confidence and a crisis of identity. Who am I if I lose my money or my job? What if I can't support my family and meet my obligations? Times of crisis are times of challenge and also of opportunity.

Whatever other possibilities are present in this economic crisis, the most important is the opportunity to claim a clearer sense of who you are and what you value – to reclaim your dream. Couple the desire that is present in each of us for a better life and a better world with a sense of what God can do with your life to create justice, peace and unity in the world. Let your sacred imagination be free and you can experience the abundant possibility of what life can be. When we claim our dreams, that changes everything!

What is God dreaming through us today, through your life and mine? I can hardly wait to see the promises of our lives unfold – all of us, the young and not-so-young, the hopeful and the doubtful. Our dreams live within God's dream for each of us.

As for Crossroads Church, we are still committed to congregational leadership, to shaping community led by the Spirit. We are still passionate about social justice, freedom, equity, justice, inclusion, and peace. We remain determined that our voice be heard in support of the voiceless and the marginalized of our own society and of other countries. We are determined to challenge and engage our city, the church writ large, all people, and the powers by direct involvement, as part of MORE2 (Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity), and through support of The Alliance of Baptists and other organization on behalf of God's dream for freedom, justice, and opportunity for all people.

As a congregation, we are still energized to offer dynamic, interactive worship – to touch our neighborhood with a ministry of musical theater for all ages. We continue to offer reconciliation, hope, and a pathway to those estranged from the church. We will continue to offer freedom and fellowship to all who are seeking to ask their deepest questions and discover their truth.

Recently, I offered this the vision I see of Crossroads becoming a church of hundreds, gathering to experience life in the Spirit, and touching tens of thousands of lives through our congregational ministries and our presence in the community. We have a passion for social justice, the arts, freedom, and the journey. We have a determined stance to welcome to embrace all people to work for the vision of God's shalom in our individual lives and in the life of this faith community.

But we will only touch and transform the world if each of us takes seriously the obligation to become all we can be in relationship with God, each other, and our selves – by discovering our calling, embracing our gifts, and living out that calling for the good of the world and the realization of our own potential. It is time to step up, take up our cross, and lead by example, action, word, and relationship.

This pathway is not without risk. “People who take the risk of doing what they are for, and are regarded as leaders, will be deified or crucified, or both.” (Francis Dewar, 94). But if our desire is to follow Jesus' way, to find meaning in our existence, and to experience what the Bible calls abundant life, there is no other way. The vision I see through your eyes is a matter of imagination. I urge you to trust in what we cannot quite see, through sacred imagination, the dream God's dreams for our congregation and our world.

Let these words guide our dreaming, our imagining, and our becoming:

“Have confidence in yourselves that you should think deep and big, that for God [nothing] is impossible, that the urge you feel within yourselves has historical significance, that there where the Spirit is, there is freedom, that real love dispels fear, that once you stop out of mediocrity (the mediocrity of small dreams) you are saved, that the possibilities are enormous and the world is thirsty for such steps, ...that many are waiting for such first and courageous steps. ...I would insist that you are in a privileged position, you are the links with the past and, at the same time, the seeds of the future. But seeds have to fly with the wind, to go with the Spirit, in order to fall on other, unknown, grounds and yield fruit.”

(Raimundo Panikkar, “Letter to a Young Monk,” *Living Prayer*, 1986)

Take the journey. Fly with the Spirit toward the unknown land and yield the fruit of justice, peace, and love in Jesus' name.