

“Come Dream With Us” by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. x3060430
Acts 3:12-19 and Luke 24:36b-48
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 30 April, 2006

It was Easter evening in Jerusalem. The disciples were gathered in a room. They were sad and confused. For all they knew, Jesus was dead! They had heard some outlandish stories from the women that the tomb had been found empty that morning. Two of the disciples said they had seen Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

Confusion, sadness, nostalgia, and grief can temporarily immobilize a group of people. We’ve experienced it ourselves as we received the news that a grandparent or parent had died unexpectedly. We experienced it as we gathered around television sets in disbelief on Sept. 11, 2001.

All of a sudden, Jesus appeared with the disciples in the room. Luke says the disciples were “startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost.”¹ Jesus asked, “Why are you frightened?”

He asks you and me today, “Why are you frightened?” What frightens us today? Perhaps we’re afraid of not having enough finances. One look at the pump prices of gasoline will send us into shock and awe! We sit down with our checkbook register or our online banking screen and try to plan ahead, to figure how we’re going to make ends meet. Then comes the big announcement: “no more purchases. Nothing except food and rent for the next two months!” We’re immobilized.

Perhaps we’re afraid we won’t be able to finish that project for class in time. There’s just so much research to do, and we’re not going to get it done, and we’re going to get a bad mark, and we’re going to fail the course, and then we’re not going to get into grad school, and our whole career is terminated before it ever began. And now we’re so depressed we can’t do the research! Fear!

Sue and I were on a canoe trip in Algonquin Park in Canada. We were all alone– the only ones on that lake. After doing the dinner dishes, we saw a bear– not out across the water, or down the path. The bear was right there in our campsite making off with our bread. We were immobilized. We stood there frozen until the bear waddled away. Then, we got little sleep that night wondering how close the bear was and how much more she wanted to eat!

Perhaps we’re afraid that the church as we know it is dying. We have seen these mega-churches booming. We’ve heard of those churches with that praise music, with those drums and guitars, growing, and we’re immobilized. We’re frightened that there is no future for us. “Don’t get into some kind of a building program, because we don’t know where the money’s coming from.” And, “Oh dear, we’re not going to make it, and the University is going to take us over.” Fear.

Perhaps we’re afraid of death. I remember the death of one particular church member. Her name was Jane, and she died unexpectedly. Her death sent that church into paralysis. Jane was the one at all the church meetings. She was the one who would come early and make the coffee. She would be there to fold the newsletter for mailing. She would come in to answer the phone when the secretary had to run an errand. Her death reminded the members of that church about how much work it takes to maintain a church community. Her death reminded the members that

¹Luke 24:37

they too were mortal.

Jesus said to the frightened disciples, “Peace be with you.”²This Jesus takes away the doubts in our hearts. We know now that there is life in these tired old bones. We know that death does not have to paralyze us. Jesus said to the frightened disciples, “Touch me and see.” And they did. And they believed that Jesus was real.

Touch Jesus. Touch him with your heart. Know that he is real, and that he has overcome fear and death. After the disciples touched Jesus and believed that he was real, he did something amazing. And he does the same thing with us. In our fear and doubt and immobility, Jesus sends us out. He tells us to be witnesses to the power and strength of the risen Christ. He says proclaim the good news of forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning here in Elon.

It wasn't long before this group of frightened disciples felt the Holy Spirit. That spirit got inside them and infused them with new life. They left that upper room and started talking to the very people who scared them the most. They told them right to their faces, “You handed Jesus over. You rejected him in the presence of Pilate. You killed the author of life.”³

Then, they did even more amazing things. Peter and John healed a blind beggar in the name of Jesus Christ, but here's what they said to the crowd that had gathered around them: “Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors”⁴ did this.

Last June you commissioned a Vision Team to set to work to present us with a vision for the future. Your Vision Team has worked hard, praying, studying the scriptures, listening to you and dreaming about what could be. Your vision team is asking you to dream with them. They're asking you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to set aside fear, to touch Jesus, and to allow yourselves to be sent out as witnesses to the power of God.

As long as we sit here in this room, fearful of the future, fearful of our inabilities, fearful of what “they” might do to us, we will be immobilized.

Come dream with us. Dream with us about how this church can distinguish itself as the spiritual center of this community. Dream with us about how church and university can collaborate to touch lives! Dream with us about how we can recruit accepting, thinking, and creative personnel who will foster community relations and spiritual development. Dream with us about how we can market and promote our identity as a church. Dream with us about how our facilities could support our being a center for community spiritual life.

This is Easter! Jesus Christ is alive. The Holy Spirit is empowering, and with God, all things are possible!

²Luke 24:36

³Acts 3:13-14

⁴Acts 3:12-13