

Sermon: Fourth Sunday of Advent
Matthew 1:18–25
By The Rev. Alfredo Feregrino
St. Luke's ~ San Lucas Episcopal Church
Date: December 21, 2025

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who loved bedtime because he loved his dreams. Each night, he prayed, “God, be with me while I sleep.”

And that night, the little boy dreamed that he was in a dark forest, unsure where to go. Suddenly, a small lamp appeared in his hands. That small lamp did not light the whole forest; it only illuminated a very small area around him. As he walked, the light moved with him, showing just enough of the path to keep going.

When the little boy woke up, (after his dream) he felt different. He didn't know everything about the day ahead, but he knew (in his gut) what to do next.

At school that morning, when a new child sat alone, the little boy remembered the lamp (in his dream) and went to sit beside the new child.

That night, as the little boy went back to sleep, he smiled and said, “Thank you, God, for the light.”

And he learned that sometimes dreams don't give us all the answers, but they show us just enough of the path to keep going, to see ahead, to see new possibilities.

So, (my question for you)

Have you ever had a dream in which you discover a truth you have been searching for?
Have you ever had a dream in which you discover a new direction and a new purpose for your life?

The story we hear in the gospel appointed for this Sunday is about Joseph and his dream, and it takes us to the very heart of Advent: to a quiet, intimate, almost hidden moment, where God acts in unexpected ways.

There is an ordinary man, Joseph, and a dream that changes the course of his life—and the course of history.

In this particular text, Joseph is at the center of the narrative.

Joseph is in crisis. His world has been shaken. Mary, to whom he is engaged, is expecting a child that is not his. As a righteous man, he wants to do the right thing: protect her from shame, separate quietly, avoid causing her harm. He is trying to resolve everything in the most reasonable, responsible, and human way possible.

And it is precisely (here), in that moment of confusion, that God breaks in.

Joseph falls asleep, and in his dream an angel reveals the truth to him:

“Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:20)

In a way, we are being invited into Joseph’s version of the Annunciation story, where Mary, in this Gospel, has no speaking role at all. We must remember that Mary speaks only four times in all the Gospels: at the Annunciation and in the Magnificat, both in the Gospel of Luke, and at the Wedding at Cana and at the Crucifixion in the Gospel of John.

What is interesting here is that Mary does not speak at all in the Gospel of Matthew.

Therefore, this narrative is entirely about Joseph and his dream—it is about God breaking in.

Yes, our Holy Scriptures are filled with events in which divine messengers, visions, dreams, and apparitions reveal a God who communicates in many ways, reminding us that this same God continues to speak and to act in the events of our lives and our history.

And within this context, dreams seem to be the way God most often chooses to communicate with us in the Sacred Scriptures

Dreams seem to be the way God prefers to speak there.

We have many, many examples in our Holy Scriptures.

We have the other Joseph from the Old Testament, a person who received many dreams and who was also a famous interpreter of dreams. He was imprisoned in Egypt after the misfortune with his brothers and found his way to freedom through the accurate interpretation of the dreams. It was his father, Jacob, who encountered God through a dream of a ladder with angels ascending and descending. His grandfather, Abraham, experienced the affirmation that he would be the father of a great nation through a dream.

And we have Hagar, the Egyptian servant of Sarah (Abraham’s wife), who, after being cast out with her son Ishmael, encountered God in a dream and received help. Abraham was the father of Ishmael.

We also have Solomon, called to a sacred mission, like Abraham. We also have the prophets, who hear the voice of God through the medium of dreams.

We see this in Jeremiah, where God says, “*Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream*” (Jeremiah 23:28).

And then, in this very same gospel of Matthew, we have the magi who came from the East, to whom God sent a message through a miraculous dream after they had seen the child Jesus, warning them to stay away from King Herod.

And like these examples of dreams, we have many more throughout our Holy Scriptures.

Yes, it seems that dreams are the preferred way in which God speaks and communicates in our Sacred Scriptures...

but please know that God appears to us in many other ways now , through prayer, nature and community.

Walter Brueggemann, a theologian and one of the most prolific writers on the Hebrew Scriptures, reminds us that all the dreams in Scripture have something in common.

He says that dreams represent the intrusion of God into a settle world. Dreams, he tells us, are an impulsive and spontaneous communication by God in the darkness of the night, opening those who sleep to a world different from the one they inhabit during the day.

An intrusion that creates a turbulent discomfort with the way things are, until the vision and the dream come to be realized.

Yes, until the vision and the dream are fulfilled.

Joseph, here, wakes from his dream and carries out his mission, caring for a vulnerable Mary and a child not yet born.

And, as with many of the other biblical figures I mentioned before, having been changed by their dreams, they discovered a new purpose.

Joseph followed a truth he already possessed; he trusted his intuition; he trusted his instincts.

Deep in his gut, Joseph knew that he wanted to take Mary as his wife. The intrusion of God in the dream came to reaffirm the true knowledge that Joseph already had.

And it was up to him to follow the truth he already knew.

I suppose that God's intrusion in a dream is a way of reaffirming something you already know deep within yourself, right?

I suppose that the ability to see what has been in front of us all along can be the gift of a dream.

Some dreams inspire clarity of vision, moving us to action.

So I wonder:

What are the truths that are deep within you, that you already know, but only need reaffirmation in order to bringing them into reality?

What needs to be awakened in you for this to happen?

What have you been afraid to do? What doubts hold you back?

Dreams tell us truths we already know deep within ourselves, inspiring clarity of vision and moving us to action.

Dreams can be that powerful channel through which we create a new reality.

Dreams are the path through which God frees us and sets us on the way to new possibilities.

So, I invite you to bring your concerns before God, to pray for guidance and direction, and to ask for the intuition of the dreams that will come to you.

In this time of expectation, I invite you to imagine, I invite you to dream, I invite you to remain open to being interrupted by God, the creator of all our dreams.

Amen.

A note from the preacher:

Because sermons are meant to be preached and therefore prepared with emphasis on verbal presentation (i.e., are written for the ear), the written accounts occasionally deviate from proper and generally accepted principles of grammar and punctuation. Most often, these deviations are not mistakes per se, but are indicative of an attempt to aid the listener in the delivery of the sermon.