

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota

Psalm 46
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
October 28, 2018

KIDS' MESSAGE

I need three volunteers – a **grandpa/grandma**, a **mom/dad** and a **kid**. I have some boards lined up here on the floor. Gary Clark made them for us. These boards represent our **walk through life**. I want my three characters to walk along the top of these boards together. Start here and cross to the other side without falling off. Will this be easy or hard? This looks kind of hard.

Sometimes life is kind of hard too. Everyone has some tough stuff to face. Some fun challenges to take on. Lots of things to learn. Lots of growing to do. Someday you will be starting preschool, kindergarten, high school, maybe a job, or the army or college. Maybe someday you will get married, have some kids, grandkids? A house of your own to take care of. . . These are good things, but can be hard too.

Can you three make it across these boards alone? Does it help to hold hands with each other? What if someone came along side of you and held your hand to help you to balance?

Now I need a **God volunteer**. God is the one who goes out into our world and finds people to step up and come alongside us. God moves through everyday people to help us to have the best walk in life that we can. What about if God brought up a **Sunday school teacher**, a **school teacher**, a **pastor**, a **youth band member** . . . ? Could these people help you to get across the boards, to live a good life? These people can help all of you to cross our path of life! Let's do it!

God promises to walk along side of us all the days of our lives. And God uses wonderful Christian people to support and help us. God promises to hold onto your hand and help you every day. Will you try to hang onto God's helping hand too? We do that when we meet here in worship, when we pray, when we read the Bible, when we help each other, when we let others help us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE - God Has a Dream

Last week, just as darkness began to fall, I found myself **standing on the edge of a dream**. Jennifer and I were over in Brookston, Minnesota. We had spent the day helping my sister, Judi, as she emptied out her house and garage in preparation for sale. She is moving to Duluth.

I hustled around finishing a couple of outside chores before heading into the house for the night. Then it hit me. I needed to go and stand on the river bank at the edge of Judi's yard. Beneath me the mighty St. Louis River, surface almost smooth, slipped quietly by. My eyes searched the opposite bank for any sign of deer coming down to drink. Gradually, the moon and stars appeared in the night sky overhead. Except for the log cabin home, a hundred feet and a few trees behind me, there was not another light shining for miles around. The woods, sky and river were so peaceful and for a few minutes I stood and savored their embrace. It was then I realized **I was standing on the edge of my sister and brother-in-law's dream**.

Ernie, Judi's husband of almost 50 years, probably dreamt about living on the banks of the St. Louis River since he was a child. Judi, once they married, joined him in his dream. Together they worked hard to raise a family, serve in their vocations, care for the world around them and eventually to build their dream home where I now stood.

Once nearing retirement, Ernie cut the trees, milled the timber and then built his log cabin. They enjoyed some wonderful times in their retirement home. However, the 2012 rainstorm of the century flooded their house almost up to the top of the kitchen counters. They salvaged what they could, dried the house out and then elevated it another six feet to rise above possible future floods. That fall night, last week, **I stood on the edge of Ernie and Judi's dream**. In 2016, cancer took Ernie's life. Now the house and land along the river are being sold.

That is the shortcoming with our dreams. Not everything always goes as we might have hoped. We have all had dreams. Some of us are living our dreams right now. Healthy, happy family. Good job. Plenty of vacation and good benefits. Enough money to pay the bills with a little in the bank for trips or emergencies. For many of you, your dream has also been a retirement home up north. But dreams can be hard to hang onto. What's your dream?

Last week, I stood on the bank above the St. Louis River. By the next night, I was home again. Jennifer had flown off to Arizona to help her parents now plagued by Mom's unknown illness and Dad's cancer. Crackling campfire, brats and a starry sky once again welcomed me to water's edge. This time however, I found myself **standing on the edge of my own dream** – White Sand Lake in Baxter, Minnesota.

Jennifer and I have also pursued our dream. Children raised and well-cared for, hopefully giving them a good start in the world and tools to live thankful, joyful and caring lives. Home of our own. A 1950's house that we purchased for very little and have been gradually fixing up. On water – raised on a lake myself, I never thought I would be able to have that opportunity as an adult. Forty-five years of marriage. Retirement approaching. All three kids married to wonderful spouses. Two fine little grandsons who live close enough to visit. My dream. . . Our dream. . .

Last Thursday night, there on the edge of our dream, I stood reflecting upon 66 years of life. How did that happen? How could I have been so fortunate? My heart and mind overflowed with thanksgiving to God. For the next couple of hours, I sat beside that lake and fire, beneath that night sky, and soaked up the **wonder of the Creator of the Universe**. I exalted in **the Holy Spirit who blew like the wind** across the lake and deep within my heart and soul. I dozed off in the **arms of the Good Shepherd who gave his life for me** on the cross and who has promised to love and care for me for all of eternity. Eternity. . .

Ernie and Judi shared a beautiful dream. Jennifer and I share a beautiful dream. Every life has its ups and downs, its victories and defeats. **Our dreams are all limited** by this temporal world... By mistakes we make, by lack of resources, by natural calamity, by evil crashing into our lives, by death... **Our dreams for our lives sooner or later come to an end. But not God's dreams... God's dream for us never ends...** What is God's dream for us?

In our ancient text from the **Prophet Jeremiah**, God speaks to those people and to us. **"I will make a new covenant with (my people) ... "I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more."** (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The ancient **Psalmist** makes God's dream even more vivid. **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult."** Do you think that we are surrounded by evil and trouble today? Almost 3,000 years ago, the Psalmist goes on, **"The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."** Come hell or high water, God is there for God's people. God is there for you.

And what is God's answer to the troubles that surround us in the world, to the doubts, fears and struggles that we wrestle with in our own lives? **"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."**

"Refuge?" "What's the future of this old world? What's the future of our nation? What's the future of First Lutheran Church? What is your future? Just starting out in pursuit of your dreams? Nearing the end of your life? Earlier dreams gone? New dreams started? **Do you need a new dream** starting today?"

Your future, our future is a part of God's dream. God's dream is you, me, our world - **trusting our past, present and future** safely into the **loving, compassionate and ever-present hands of God.**

God waited on the banks of the St. Louis River with Judi and Ernie. In the rescue boat as the river rose beyond its bounds and trapped them in their home. In the Florida hospital room when Ernie left this world and Jesus carried him home to the place saved for him at God's banqueting table. God was there for Judi and Ernie all along and will continue to be as Judi starts the next chapter in her life.

Last week, God waited on the shore of White Sand Lake with me. God watched in Apache Junction, Arizona as Jennifer cared for her aged parents. God embraces us right here and now at First Lutheran Church in Aitkin, Minnesota. **All of us, all of this, is a part of God's dream.** God's dream is **certain and sure.** God's dream **moves faithfully forward** into our future, into God's future, into eternity... for us, for you. . . **I will be your God and you will be my people. You shall all know me. I will be your refuge, strength and very present help in trouble. Be still and know that I am God. Be still. . . God. . . For you. . .**

Whatever the future may hold in store for you, there is **no better, more hopeful word**, than for you to know that **you are**, that **this faith family is, safe, secure and eternally loved by God. You, me, this planet – God’s dream.** God dreamt us up and God is not about to give up on us. Then, if that’s true, there’s nothing left but for us to **love God back** and to **trust God with our lives, future, hopes and dreams.** Are you trusting God right now? Tomorrow? Come what may? **Together we stand on the edge of God’s dream for us. There’s no better place to stand.** Thanks be to God. Amen.