



Dare to Dream Again - Moving Out of Our Comfort Zones

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Introduction:

When God calls us to do something great for him, it usually involves the supernatural. It usually involves taking steps of faith. It's trusting God for the end result, even though we don't know all the answers or how things are going to work out. It's a walk of faith, remember? We walk by faith, not by sight. That's how it is.

In his book *He Still Moves Stones*, Max Lucado says:

Jesus says the options are clear. On one side there is the voice of safety. You can build a fire in the hearth, stay inside, and stay warm and dry and safe. You can't get hurt if you never get out, right? You can't be criticized for what you don't try, right? You can't fall if you don't take a stand, right? You can't lose your balance if you never climb, right? So don't try it. Take the safe route.

Or you can hear the voice of adventure – God's adventure. Instead of building a fire in your hearth, build a fire in your heart. Follow God's impulses. Adopt the child. Move overseas. Teach the class. Change careers. Run for office. Make a difference. Sure, it isn't safe, but what is? You think staying inside out of the cold is safe? Jesus disagrees. "Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it." I like the words of General Douglass McArthur when he was seventy-eight, "Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin but to give up interest wrinkles the soul."

The truth is that we all have our comfort zones. We're not even aware of what some of these comfort zones are. But over years we've been programmed to do life and ministry in particular ways. And some of these patterns can be the biggest obstacles to fulfilling our God-given dreams. In case you don't believe you have particular comfort zones let me ask you a few questions:

- If you're a man who shaves in the morning, where was the first place on your face that you shaved? How about the day before? You've probably used the same pattern for years.
- How many of you came to church today by the same route you've traveled all year long?
- Are you sitting in the same place or near the same place you sat a week ago, the last time we assembled in this auditorium?

In fact, to help get us "comfortable" leaving our comfort zones, I'm going to ask you right now to change your seat and sit in a part of the auditorium you'd normally not sit in. You may want to sit over on the left if you normally sit here on the right. If you're a "sit in the back" sort of person, you may want to come to the front (heaven forbid). But

I'm asking you to get a different view of the sanctuary. I'm going to give you a few moments to move right now. Go ahead. It will really help you to do this. (*move seats*)

Explanation:

It's a whole new view, isn't it? I'm going to preach to you from the side of the platform today. We've been talking about Daring to Dream Again: Overcoming the barriers that hold you back. And one of the major barriers holding us back from dreaming God's dreams is our reluctance to get out of our comfort zones. The amazing thing is that many times we would rather face the pain of staying the same than risk the uncertainty of change. Yet, if you're walking with God, chances are He is leading you to change. As we've been talking over the last several weeks, God is leading many of us to dream again!

In fact we are in a growing mode – have been for this whole summer and fall. When churches grow, there are challenges. In order to facilitate and accommodate growth it requires that changes take place. We may not be able to sit in the same pew we did for the past 10 years. We may not have the same parking spot we did for the past 5 months. We may be called on to go to a different service for the sake of those who God is drawing into our fellowship. We may have to help out with some aspect of ministry that we haven't done before and it will require us to stretch. We may have to give a bit more time or finances to have equipment that is needed. We cannot just say, well I'm not comfortable with change, or don't count on me to help out or adjust so God's plan or vision can be accomplished. When we set our minds that way, we limit God, and He has bigger plans and dreams than we can imagine. WE HAVE TO MOVE WITH HIM and that means moving beyond where we are comfortable.

In Luke 1, God calls a young teenage girl to a new dream. When God called Mary to be the mother of Jesus, she had to stretch her faith and cross over several comfort zones. Mary was a young teenager. Many Bible students believe Mary would have been about 15 years old at the time. She lived in a male-dominated culture, where people would not understand or sympathize with a woman who was pregnant and not married. (I believe it was last year that a court overseas actually pronounced the sentence of stoning on an unwed mother). That's the kind of culture Mary lived in. And now God was asking Mary to risk the misunderstanding and the judgment of others by bearing the baby Jesus.

Do you think it was comfortable for Mary to get pregnant before she and Joseph were married? Do you think it was comfortable for Mary to realize God had a purpose for her life and it was through her willingness to be useful that she would carry and give birth to the savior of mankind? Do you think it was comfortable for Mary to answer questions all her life about Jesus? I would say NO to every one of those questions. Let's read the story this morning.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

I. To dream one has to get beyond fear.

Mary had to get past the fear of the angelic visitor. She had to push past the fear of rejection from her

family and peers. She had to push past the fear of her inability to do anything but be willing for God to use her.

What this angel told her, and the things that God had planned for her were way beyond what she could have dreamed for herself.

Dreams often lie unfulfilled or shattered because of fear – the fear of rejection, ridicule, or failure. We did a series on fear this summer. Go back and revisit what we shared in that series if your dream is hindered by fear.

If you allow fear to dominate your thinking, you will never get past your comfort zone. I'm afraid of things I don't know or understand. TRUST GOD. Does God have your best interest at heart? ABSOLUTELY! Is He going to allow you to fail? NEVER! Will His plan and dream stretch you and your faith? YOU BET.

II. To dream one has to take risks

Understand the background to this; Mary was a woman who was a teen-ager that lived in a male dominated society. Her dream would involve risk.

Most times we choose not to take risks. Not taking risks is safe. Not taking risks is comfortable. Not taking risks is OK – but all through scripture when God moved and wanted to fulfill a dream, it involved taking risks. The risk factor when it comes to God's dreams is called faith. That faith is measured by our obedience to do the thing God is calling us to, but that usually means we have to move beyond where we are comfortable.

I think of Moses when God called him to lead the children of Israel. I think of Noah in building the ark. I think of Daniel and the lions den. I think of Rahab and the risk she took with the spies coming into Jericho. ALL of these people took risks to accomplish the dream God had for them.

III. To dream again must include GOD

WITH God the dream becomes possible.

Mary understood that becoming the mother of Jesus was something beyond her ability to do. Dreaming God's dreams are bigger than you are. You are not able to pull off this dream on your own, by yourself,

in your power. In dreaming again we must intentionally allow God to be involved.

Mary questioned how will this be? She was looking for a way to explain the condition she was about to find herself – pregnant and unmarried. She was not going to have a baby because right then she wasn't married yet. Her pregnancy put at risk Joseph's reputation, the life of her baby and her own life. In those days, unmarried women who got pregnant were put away. They could have been stoned to death for being promiscuous. She asked a question that any one would ask – how will this happen?

God assured her that He would be involved in this event and the end of this dream would be the birth of the Savior. The angel made it clear to Mary that with God nothing is impossible.

What dream has God put in your heart? You may be saying – it's too big. I can't do this. Let me remind you that with God, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

IV. Be willing to accept God's plan

Mary's final response comes in verse 38. "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Courage doesn't mean you don't feel fear. It means you act in spite of your fear. That's why one of the most repeated phrases of the Bible is "don't fear!"

The call of God demands a response. God's call is always a call to action. God wants us to act in spite of our fear. Fear can seal our lips when we should speak; it can cause us to say "no" when we should say "yes." God is always looking for willing servants. People who are ordinary but who will say, "God use me any way you choose. God don't let my fear limit what you are doing or what you have put in my heart to do. Don't let me look at the dream from my human point of view. Let me see that with you nothing is impossible."

V. There may be some pain involved in realizing the dream

Mary suffered pain. Usually there is an order to life and death. Normally the parent precedes the child in death. It just doesn't seem right that a parent has to bury their child. There is a great deal of suffering in that event.

Mary had gotten beyond her fear, she had taken a risk, she included God, she was willing to accept

God's plan, and now the dream that she was willing to embrace brings her pain. She stood by and saw Jesus falsely accused. She heard about the trial, she heard about the beating, and saw the effects of his torture. She saw him spit on, and mocked and humiliated. She watched him be nailed to the cross and the suffering he endured as he died. How painful that must have been for her to watch.

The angel had told her His name will be great. He will save his people from their sin. Did she say, "but not by way of the cross, oh God?"

Just because we experience pain in life, doesn't mean the dream wasn't real, or the dream is over. There are times that for something to be birthed, for a ministry to come into being, for a church to realize growth, for certain things to happen, there is pain.

People often ask, "How can I distinguish my dream from God's dreams?" I like the words of Fredrick

Conclusion:

We've got to recognize that the purpose of life isn't our comfort. The purpose of life is to glorify God.

We need to respond this morning. Some here are holding back because you are not comfortable with what God is speaking to you. It is beyond you. It is bigger than you are. You are afraid, your faith is shaky, and you are holding back taking the risk of following God's dream. As a result, God's plan is *on hold* in your life.

Maybe God is calling you to give Him your life – to let Him be your Savior and Lord and you have come here this morning, seeking peace with Him. Now is your time to respond.

First if you want to receive Jesus and be a follower of His, I want you to stand where you are this morning. Get out of your comfort zone. I want you to come and stand here at this altar.

Second if you are a follower of Jesus and you want to lay at this altar something that is keeping you from the dream God has for you – fear, inability to take the risk, you have been unwilling to accept God's plan, or you don't know if you can handle the pain that might be involved, come stand here today.

I want to pray for you.

Buechner. He says "*God's call is the place where my gifts intersect with the needs of humanity.*" God's dream for us always involves glorifying him through serving others.

Living the dream meant pain for Mary. No doubt living God's dream will mean pain for you. Following the dream can be a source of great joy and blessing but, like most good things in life, it comes with a cost. Any significant accomplishment in life brings not only pleasure but pain.

If your dream is worthy of the title of dream, there will be difficulty attached. Whether it is learning a new language, going on a short-term mission trip, sharing Christ in your neighborhood or office, dreams come at the price of pain. But it is the pain of growth and maturity, not the pain of regret and dissipation!