
Filthy Cars, Big Macs, and Dreams Come True

**A sermon by the Rev. Canon Ashley Carr
The Third Sunday of Advent – Year A**

My car is filthy. I do not sleep uninterrupted. The walls of our house are scuffed and marred. Much of my time is not my own. I don't put my kids to bed on Christmas Eve. And at home I never know when I'm out of La Croix. The list of repairs, projects, and improvements never seems to end. Every 6 weeks this giant blue box from some place called Chewy arrives on my porch and I have to haul it inside and dump it into a bucket. There are so many parties, I cannot attend them all.

And all of this, all of this trouble is because my dreams have come true.

I am a mother. I am a wife. I am a priest. I own a home. I have dogs. I have good friends.

Some of our dreams really do come true. You have your own. I hope you're picturing them now. Your dreams that have come true.

The thing about our dreams that come true is that they are so rarely how we imagined them. I dreamed that my kids would drive me crazy, but I didn't know they would drive me this crazy! I dreamed about learning to live with someone else when I got married, but I didn't know that person I married would constantly drink the last La Croix without telling me. I dreamed that I'd own a house, but I didn't know that everything would break only when money is tight. I dreamed about having dogs, but I forgot that they'd get older and needier. I dreamed that I'd have friends, but I didn't know they would want to hang out literally all of the time.

What wonderful dreams they were. What wonderful dreams they are. Nothing like I imagined, and yet they are my dreams come true.

It's not that I'm complaining, it's just that I didn't expect this. It's not that it's bad, it's just that it's different. I am so grateful for stories in scripture that help remind me that in all of these dreams that have become my reality, it is in fact God who made them so. My family was knit together by God's hand, I am overflowing with abundance because God has so richly blessed me, dogs are cute because of God.

God makes our dreams come true. I just didn't think God's sense of humor was quite so sharp.

When we meet John the Baptist in this morning's gospel, he's landed in jail. He expressed some discontent with King Herod and, well, you really weren't supposed to do that. So there John was. Stuck in jail only hearing stories about what Jesus was up to. Now, John has already seen Jesus, they splashed around in the water of baptism together and remember that John's been carrying on about Jesus coming for ages. He's been preparing the way for Jesus hollering at anyone with ears to hear that the Messiah would be coming. And he did. In fact, when Jesus got there, even the Holy Spirit even got involved and stirred in John to make him absolutely sure that it was the real Jesus. He proclaimed that he knew for sure it was Jesus he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

John knew Jesus.

So, then what's with the incarcerated inquiry? "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" In other words, is it seriously you?

Alas, John's prophetic dreams had come true. Here was the guy. Jesus was doing the things, running around

changing the world. But John, John was still stuck in jail. John was still trapped under the oppressive thumb of an evil ruler who he kind of thought might have been higher up on Jesus' to do list. Instead, Jesus is what? Healing people. Restoring people's lives and their dignity. Spreading love in the least likely places.

This is not exactly what John's dreams were made of. John dreamed of Jesus, but not this version of him. John's dreams might have been a bit more on the revenge end of the spectrum. That was not happening. Jesus sends word back, the blind can see, the lame can walk, the deaf can hear, the dead are alive, the poor have good news. That is what Jesus came to do. Jesus came to make those dreams come true. He didn't come with wrath and vengeance, he didn't come to fight, he didn't come to bring perfection to our lives, but rather he came with love to restore us to the fullest versions of ourselves.

God sent Jesus to make our dreams come true.

In this story, we're invited into this moment between these two souls, John and Jesus. Two souls who loved each other who were in fact a dream come true, we're invited into this difficult moment to teach us that we cannot judge the reality or effectiveness of our belief in Jesus based on what he has not done in our lives. Maybe you didn't get the kids. Or you didn't get the house. Or God forbid you got a cat instead of a dog. The dreams unrealized are not how we know God. Instead, it's about what God is doing, what Jesus did do. Not what we expect God to do, but what God does regardless of our expectations. Those are the dreams.

Many of my dreams have come true in one way or another, I'm sure that's true for you. Many of my dreams have not come true in one way or another, I'm sure that's true for you too. In this season of Advent as we careen towards Christmas, we often find that contrast stark. All that we have and all that we don't staring us right in the face. God is present in all of it, but our assurance in God dwells in the unexpected realities of dreams come true.

God has done so much to make our dreams come true, whether we like it or not.

Jesus wasn't exactly what John thought he would be. Jesus was a whole lot more love than punishment. But, still, John got Jesus. He got the Messiah. We all get Jesus. We all get God, on God's terms, not ours. Our work is to recognize that which God has done in the reality of our dreams realized. When we can see what God has done, we can recognize the difference between our dreams and our expectations. I dreamed about a family, but I expected something close to perfection. Ha. Alas, God has done God's job.

God does make dreams come true.

I'll tell you where I've learned more about how to see what God has done out on the streets of Atlanta with some people who live there and have become friends of mine. My friend Richard's 50th birthday was coming up, and I said to him, "I'd love to do something special for you for your birthday. Sky's the limit ask me for anything." He thought for a long while and he finally said, "Could we get a Big Mac and sit and eat it together in the McDonalds?" I said, "Well yeah, but you could have anything, don't you want to ask me for something else?" He said, "Pastor, I have everything else I need. I get lots of food, I have good friends around me, a safe corner to sleep in, plenty of cigarettes, and I get to talk to my daughter on email at the library. I have everything I need. But it's been a while since I sat inside to eat a good burger with a friend."

I don't guess Richard expected that he'd be 50 years old, addicted to drugs, and living on a church stoop. I do guess that Richard dreamed of having life, community, and some relationship with his daughter.

Dreams do come true.

Some don't, but lots of them do. Look around at what God has done. Look around at what God has done and behold your dreams come true.