



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR  
THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, JANUARY 5, 2025  
JEREMIAH 31:7-14; PSALM 84; EPHESIANS 1:3-6, 15-19a; MATTHEW 2: 13-15, 19-23

## EMBRACING GOD'S DREAM FOR US

**Matthew 2:13-15,19-23** *[After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."]*

Did you know that Joseph never actually speaks in the gospels? He seems to be engaged in quite the conversation with God, however, where dreams figure prominently in the discourse. St. Joseph, patron saint of dreamers; patron saint of Jungian psychology, we could say.

Joseph is actually patron saint of many groups—my research this past week reveals that the Christian tradition connects at least fifty groups with Joseph as patron saint. Some make intuitive sense—families expecting children, carpenters, house hunters, travelers,

orphans, and the unhoused. His story, as recounted in Matthew's gospel, provides clear touchstones for each of these.

But others have more obscure connections which had me pondering this week how these came to be. Accountants, for example. Why accountants? Well, in the story, the purpose for Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem was to return to his home village to pay taxes. So I can make that link without too much of a stretch.

Attorneys are another group for whom Joseph is patron saint. A little harder to connect the dots there. Was it that Joseph, whom we are told was a "just man," first thought he'd dismiss Mary quietly when she turned up pregnant before they were married, but then he had a change of heart, resolving to do the most just thing for this young woman and her unborn child, who would have been relegated to the margins of society, sentenced to a life of extreme poverty, shame and suffering? Lawyers, it seems to me, are charged with a chief concern to seek what is most just, so perhaps therein lies to connection.

He's also the patron saint of interior souls, which I take to mean those who have an intuitive spiritual grounding, who can be self-reflective while also being open to God's speaking into their lives in less than overt ways. Surely that describes Joseph, who is so attuned to his dreams that he acts with courage and resolve in light of them, and the world changed forever as a result.

Dreams lay bare the artificial defenses we erect in the course of convincing ourselves that we can do this alone—that we can do it well and with much grace. Dreams are mostly written in symbolic language, and only when we glean their shadows for such meaning will we come to understand their true potential in our lives.

Which brings me to one other group for whom Joseph serves as patronal saint—immigrants and refugees. Joseph and Mary and their newborn child Jesus were forced to flee their homeland to protect Jesus from Herod's tyrannical fear of a new king having been born in Bethlehem. They flee from Palestine, through Gaza, to Egypt, where they seek refuge for some two years, before returning not to

Bethlehem, but further north in Nazareth in Galilee.

But here is the beautiful point of it all: Unless Joseph's dream is really God's dream for Joseph, borne in trust that Joseph might just respond with courage and hope and faithfulness, then what good was there to come from it all?

The pattern is there for us, too. It seems to me that we must be willing to yield into the possibility that God might have a dream for us—for you and me—that God might just be interested in using you and me, and the wispy wisdom of our dreams, to change the world, too.

My friends, at this moment, there are more than 300 million people of the global human community displaced from their homes—some due to natural disasters, but the majority have fled (or were forced to flee) the violence, squalor or a suffering existence in search of safety and a new start.

It is no secret that our nation is about to launch the largest forced migration in its history, and in doing so, will most certainly separate children from parents, and cause untold suffering that will ripple

across generations to come, and will change the economic and social landscape of our nation, and not for the better, in my estimation.

We can debate and disagree about immigration policy and how best to manage the real crises of our time, but we don't get a pass when it comes to seeking and serving Christ in those who live on the margins.

You should know that last month your cathedral vestry voted unanimously to authorize Saint Mark's to reactivate its role in the Sanctuary Network which seeks to address the injustices baked into our immigration practices in real-time, and really practical ways. The historical roots of sanctuary are centuries-old, and we can trace them, and our mandate as people of faith to serve in this way, right back to biblical imperatives to serve the alien living in our midst, which is to say immigrants and refugees.

Here we stand; we can do no other. We've done it before, and in this generation, we are being asked to step up again.

We do not yet know exactly what that will look like, but if you feel moved to learn

more or to possibly play a role, I encourage you to attend a Cathedral Commons forum on Wednesday January 15<sup>th</sup>, in Bloedel or via Zoom. We are being asked to be nimble enough in our response to make a difference for good.

So I will say again: unless Joseph's dream is really God's dream for Joseph, borne in trust that Joseph might just respond with courage and hope and faithfulness, then what good was there to come from it all? How was the world changed as a result of Joseph's bold move?

And in similar vein, are we willing to embrace the possibility that God might have a dream for us—for you and me—here and now, that God might just be interested in using you and me, and the wispy wisdom of our dreams, to change the world, too?

Let us dream together, and trust that God will use it, and us, for good.



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*Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!*