

# **“FIELD OF DREAMS”**

Acts 2:1-21

preached on Pentecost, May 31, 2009

*“If we don’t have our dreams, we have nothing.”* The clip comes from a movie entitled “Astronaut Farmer.” To many it is a tale about a farmer who has this insane idea of launching himself into space. But that’s not what it’s really about. It reminds me of another film from a few years back. The year was 1989 and the critics said that Kevin Costner’s quirky little baseball movie was so bad that it would quickly disappear from sight, never to be heard from again. To them, it was a stupid story about a man building a ball field in the midst of his corn. But that’s not the point of that movie either. No! These films are about dreams, about visions longing to be fulfilled, partly about baseball and space travel, yes, but mostly about relationships, about people striving to find their desire in life. It is all about hope.

These films offer something that many in the world rarely see, and that is hope. They provide stories of hope, dreams, and visions to thousands, even millions of people who are suffering from a severe “dream-deficiency.” They strike some deep chords in the American psyche; offering a positive alternative to an American Dream that for too many had lain dormant, unfulfilled and unspoken, and occasionally evolving into a nightmare. And even now, many hearts hold this longing for the fulfillment of their own Field of Dreams. But that is nothing new.

Hopes, dreams, and visions are always tempting. But we have been disappointed so many times that is hard to lift up our dreams. It is hard to hold on to hope. When someone begins to talk about the glorious possibilities we often begin to look for the con, the catch, the loophole. We get an envelope marked with the promise of a multimillion dollar prize but what we find is only a come on for magazines, books, CD’s, or videos. We read “Money back guarantee if not completely satisfied,” but the reality is that the company is usually completely satisfied as soon as they get our money. We want to harvest a field of dreams, but so many gardens planted with seeds of hopes and dreams end up a wasteland of weeds and disappointments. Still we listen to the sales pitch; we marvel at the possibilities; our desires carry us to the edge, but mostly we go along just to see how the world will crash our hopes on the rocks of disappointment this time. But it doesn’t have to be so.

Nearly 2000 years ago on this very day a group gathered together to contemplate their future. As they prayed, the Spirit of God began to join with them, to warm their hearts

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and ignite their spirits. That Spirit sparked their imaginations and loosened their tongues. They began to talk as they never had before. Suddenly hope sprung to life within them. Their spirits came alive with excitement. The noises began to drift into the surrounding neighborhood. People started to come into the streets to look around, to see who was making all this fuss; to see what this commotion was all about. Some thought it was just a bunch of guys who indulged a bit much, a party that got out of hand. They started to turn away, but then one man began to speak.

“We are celebrating alright, but we are not the party crowd you think we are. We didn’t just stumble out of the village tavern. No! We had a vision of what is possible for us, and now hope springs from our hearts. The Spirit of God has come down upon us, just like it was predicted centuries ago. The Spirit of God has come to plant a field of dreams and we’re in the midst of it. Young and old are having visions of the power and grace of God. Dreams of God’s love are being fulfilled before our very eyes. It’s not an illusion. It’s not an empty promise. Jesus loves me. God loves me in spite of my weaknesses, in spite of my disobedience, in spite of the things I’ve done and the hurts I’ve brought. And now the Spirit of God has come to enable me to see a bright new future of power and joy; a vision of grace that will wipe away our tears and our sadness; a vision to wipe away the disappointments and disillusionment that this world brings. I have found a new life, a new love, a new hope in this, God’s field of dreams.”

That is how the church came into existence. But for many churches today, it is hard to believe. For many have forgotten how to dream. Many have fallen into a mode of maintenance, holding on to what has been. Their longing for the past is greater than their vision for the future. They keep doing the things they have always done, whether there is a purpose for them or not because they are familiar and comfortable. They continue programs that changed their lives as youth, in spite of the fact that they mean nothing to the youth of today. They have stopped dreaming new dreams. They have stopped seeking a new vision. They no longer want to risk putting their time, their energies or their hopes into something new and daring. They are afraid of living in a field of dreams. And yet, if we don’t have our dreams, if we don’t have our hope, we have nothing.

“*Build it and he will come.*” That’s what that Iowa farmer heard. “Build it and they will come.” Many churches heard that in the 30’s, 40’s, 50’s, and 60’s. They built churches and people did come. They developed centers where society could gather together, to talk and work and share together. They built the buildings and the organizations and the dreams were fulfilled. The people showed up and the church was strong. And many were so pleased that they stopped listening for the next voice. The world and the Spirit moved on,

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but many in the church could not let go of the word they heard before. The church organization worked well for its time, but the church is not an organization. No! We are a living organism. And a living organism can either grow and move forward, or shrink and die. A new society needs to hear the same gospel in a new way. We need to dream a new dream; to seek a new vision; to allow hope to spring forth again.

“Build it and they will come.” The words are the same. The Spirit, the Source is the same, but this time it is not to put together brick and concrete. Now is the time to build relationships; to build hearts and souls; to build dreams and visions; to build hope.

Years ago at Annual Conference a woman came to thank me. She said, "You don't remember me do you?" And I didn't. She told me where she was from and the family that she was part of. I was shocked. She had not been a member of my church but some in her family had been. It was not a very faithful family. I would go to serve her mother communion and she would never turn off the television, taking her eyes from the screen only long enough to pick up the bread or the cup. They were poor and dirty and needy, and most were not very bright. They would occasionally give us home made sauerkraut which we treated as toxic waste. It was a family that the church and town tolerated at best.

One Labor Day weekend this woman's nephew was in a very stupid traffic accident. He was driving his pickup, having a fight with his girlfriend when he suddenly decided to leave. Now when you are driving a truck on a country road there are very few places to go. But he gave his girlfriend the steering wheel, stepped out on the running board, and started to crawl into the bed of the pickup. I think alcohol had a part to play in this drama. Somewhere between the front seat and the bed of the truck, Todd's head hit the road, and at 11:00 at night I was called to the Emergency Room of the York Hospital.

Can you imagine my thoughts, or my mood? Late at night on a holiday weekend I went to the hospital to be with this family that most of the town mocked and made fun of. The boy had extreme trauma to the head. Pressure around the brain which should be zero was in the seventies and eighties. It was a hopeless situation. I knew my job was to prepare that family for the worst. And so I said to them, “No matter what happens, we will get through this. Look to the Lord and He will be with you every step of the way. You will not be left alone. You will not be forgotten. God will give you the strength and comfort you need for a new beginning.” It was a new dream, a new hope for them. When I went in to be with Todd, suspended in a world between life and death, I would say aloud, ALook to the Lord. Seek his grace. Feel his love. Look to the Lord even now, walking in the valley of the shadows of death, look to the Lord and you will be forgiven, not forgotten.

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There is love. There is life. There is hope.”

To the amazement of everybody, especially me, Todd got better. He works at a Giant part time now. It isn't much, but it keeps him happy and hopeful. But the thing is, it never should have happened. It was impossible, but it did happen. And the family was extremely grateful for awhile, but then we eventually got back to our normal routine, or so I thought. Then this woman came to me to thank me for helping her live through that time, for the difference it made in her life and the life of her family. So much so that she went on to be a pastor and to serve a charge in the Central Pennsylvania Conference, trying to keep hope alive, to help others like I had helped her. And it all began when someone gave her hope, someone encouraged her to dream a new dream, to seek a new vision, a hope that could be realized and fulfilled in her life.

The point is that the Lord has planted a field of dreams all around us. Hopes, dreams, and visions can be more abundant than zucchini in late summer if we will just begin to harvest them, to feed on them, to serve them to all the world around us. We can change hearts and lives for people who will go forth to change hearts and lives of people who will go forth to change hearts and lives -- if we will just look and listen to the field of dreams that the Lord has planted around us; that the Lord has given us.

We have seen some of those dreams fulfilled already. We see it with Sunbeam Station and the Northeast Clothing Bank. We see it with Angel Food, Helping Hands, and Habitat for Humanity. We see it with Bible School and our Youth, and in all sorts of events. But there are more dreams out there to be harvested. Lots more.

We, the people of God need to start dreaming big dreams, envisioning large visions of what is possible in this time and place. As the body of Christ, as individuals in Christ, we need to lift up hope and peace, joy and love. We need to know that dreams can be fulfilled, that visions can come to pass, that hope can come alive, that grace can abound, for we have a God, we have a Spirit ready to be poured out on us so that we, both young and old, male and female, so that we can dream dreams and see visions; so that we shall live in hope now and always; for God has planted a whole field of dreams for us to see and touch and taste and bring forth a new life. Begin to harvest those hopes and dreams in your life. Then go forth to feed, to change, to enlighten and enliven the world. Go forth to dream dreams and see visions. Go forth in new hope. Go forth in a new life. Go forth to make it happen, and in your life may it be so, now and forever. Amen.