

Acts 11: 1-18

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.

At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”

Teach us your way

AND WE WILL WALK IN YOUR TRUTH

Earth’s crammed with heaven/
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes/
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Instructions for living a life. Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.
Mary Oliver

If we have no peace it is because we have forgotten we belong to each other.
Saint Teresa of Calcutta

The important thing is this: to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for
what we could become.
Charles Du Bos

When you stand back and look at the Biblical narrative as a whole, you can make a case that the plot line, from Genesis to Revelation, is driven along by visions, epiphanies, revelations, miracles, dreams, mystical experiences.

“I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision,” Peter says in our text today.

I had a similar vision or trance-like experience 20 years ago when at a session of the Academy for Spiritual Formation. In this session we were learning about icons from a very good teacher. On lengthy break one afternoon, in Syracuse Indiana where this session was being held, I was sitting with an icon of Jesus' face. The eyes were particularly compelling in how they were painted, or “written” which is the proper term. All of a sudden, I experienced myself drawn, trance-like, into those eyes, pulled into those eyes as if by a magnetic force, my entire being crossing a threshold into Christ—and once “inside” those eyes I found myself on a beach alone, looking out at the vastness of the ocean. It was clear to me that Christ was as vast as that ocean, even more vast than an earthly ocean, Christ was infinitely vast. And I experienced an impactful sadness at that point. Looking out at the oceanic vastness of Christ, I realized that my knowledge of Christ was nothing more than a drop of that ocean. There was so much of him I DIDN'T know. At that point, I more or less came back to myself, in Syracuse, Indiana, sitting in the grass on a warm day with an icon of Christ on my lap. That evening, as I gathered with my small group, the question was asked of us all—how was your day? I said my day was pretty rotten in a weird sort of way. I told my friends that I began the day thinking I knew Christ pretty well, but now I realize my knowledge of him is but a drop in the ocean and I was not ok with that. Thankfully, my friends talked me into being ok with that.

The realm of the Divine is closer than we usually think. Jesus in fact said that the Kingdom of God is within us right? The Celtic Christian sensibility talks about “thin places,” where the veil that separates the earthly from the heavenly is lifted, so to speak. You may be able to name some of those thin places for yourself, from your own experience. That spot in the grass in Syracuse, Indiana is one of mine. There was a large tree on the campus at KSU where I went to pray a lot as a student, the tree itself embodied my prayers of yearning to be deeply rooted in God and reaching upward to soak up God's light. Our favorite spot on the Oregon coast is another thin place.

Visions, dreams, trances, epiphanies. We see them in the Biblical narrative, and in the story of the church over the past 2000 years. Much of the contemplative wisdom of the Church is simply testimony of those we call saints or mystics who write about their visions and dreams.

The common thread in all of these dreams and visions, one could easily say, is that there is more to know, more to experience, more to understand, more to do, more places to go. “Who will go for us?” God asks Isaiah. “Here am I! Send me!”

God is ever calling and God is ever showing the way, opening doors, inviting us in, lowering sheets, setting bushes on fire, walking through walls, opening heaven. And the reason God seems to be very busy at this is that God wants to be known, known more and more deeply and intimately AND that God wants US to know one another. God does not want to be a stranger and God does not want us to be strangers to one another.

So, Peter says to his friends in Jerusalem. “Out of this trance-like experience I found myself in a room full of Gentiles in whom I experienced the same Holy Spirit at work as I had experienced in my own experience of the Spirit. And guess what? I had to realize that what God is up to with us is bigger than I had imagined.”

“Who was I that I could hinder God?”

Silence. Don't discount the silence here-----it's crucial.

Then rejoicing... perhaps at the realization that the Gospel is not something they need to defend, the Church is not something they need to protect. The pressure is off. All they need to do is hold themselves open, all they need to do is hold space for God to be God, all they need to do is hold themselves open to the next plot twist, because sooner or later, it's coming.

Who are WE anyway... that we would ever dream of hindering God?

HE IS RISEN!

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

May 19, 2019

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering

Resurrection Bells

Let us worship the God of time and timelessness

WEAVER OF STORIES, AUTHOR OF SALVATION

God-In-Community, Holy Three-In-One

AWAKEN US TO THE GIFTS NOW WITHIN US

Lighting of the Candles

"O my God, and my rest from all pains, how entranced I am!" Teresa of Avila

97 Fairest Lord Jesus

We Welcome One Another as Christ

"Chariot Spiritual" Men's Ensemble

The Morning Prayer and Musical Response

Silence

"God is always working obscurely within us." Gerald May

Celebrating Graduation

Children's Circle

All children thru 5th grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own

"Worship and Wonder" time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

Living Word, do not keep silence

TEACH US TO WALK IN THE LIGHT, AMEN.

THE LESSON ACTS 11: 1-18

The Meditation "The Pressure Is Off" Rev. Rob Carr

In loving places, O Beloved, are You known, Your mercy extends to all the earth.

Your abode has been established in our souls, Your dwelling place in our hearts.

From deep within, You call us to grow toward harmony and wholeness.

Help us, Compassionate One, to renew the face of the earth. Amen

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

The Offering

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below

Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

425 Let Us Break Bread Together

Gracious God, Source of all blessings, you have been extravagant in your generosity
YOU HAVE PLANTED WITHIN US THE SEEDS OF HOPE AND SPREAD BEFORE US
THIS FEAST OF ALL POSSIBILITY
Words cannot express our gratitude
MAY WE EMBODY OUR THANKS WITH ACTS OF COMPASSION FOR ONE ANOTHER

Welcome to the Table
The Words of Institution

Lord Jesus Christ restore us to our rightful minds
YOU CROWN US WITH FORGIVENESS AND WE ARE AMAZED
Holy God to you we come
A PEOPLE RENEWED, FORGIVEN, SURRENDERED

The Communion Prayer
The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.
The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation
Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option
Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

677 Let There be Peace on Earth

The blessing of God who is in this place and every place
THE BLESSING OF JESUS WHO IS AMONG US, OFTEN UNRECOGNIZED
The blessing of the Holy Spirit
WHO LEADS US INTO THE LIGHT, AMEN.

TO OUR GUESTS----WELCOME!

SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE
WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY

We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via

Facebook and these websites

www.nocckc.org www.kcdisciples.org www.disciples.org

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

THIS WEEK

Today 1145AM Bell Practice
Today 1145AM Youth and Families to Red Wok
Today 2PM Jeff Nunn Studio Spring Recital
Today 5PM Northland Youth Grades 2-12 to Orange Easel
Monday 6PM Troop 900
Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group
Tuesday 6PM Pack 900
Tuesday 7PM Women's Bible Group
Wednesday 7PM Music Ministry
Thursday 630PM "You, Me and the Enneagram" Session 3

UPCOMING

MAY 22 630PM SHOWING OF THE ACCLAIMED FILM ABOUT HOWARD THURMAN
"BACKS AGAINST THE WALL" AT CHERITH BROOK

JUNE 1 TROOP AND PACK FUNDRAISER-----BRING ITEMS FOR SAVERS

JULY 22-23 DISCIPLES GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN DES MOINES

WELCOME

GREATER KANSAS CITY DISCIPLES WOMEN'S MINISTRY TO NOCC

On June 27, Disciples women from our area will be gathering beginning at 6PM (check in) for a dinner and program beginning at 630PM.

The keynote speaker is Dawn R Steiner, MD, Medical Director for UHWC (University of Health Women's Care) in Lee's Summit. Dr. Steiner is board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and also certified in daVinci robotic surgery. Sounds like this could be interesting!! All ladies and gents are welcome to attend! Looking for NOCC volunteers to help with hosting the "dining experience" and hope you'll stay for the program too!

Great food, music, and wonderful fellowship with our area Disciples!!

Contact Debbie Herrick for more information!

BAPTISM PREPARATION

Adults and children with questions and interest in Baptism this summer---

Be in touch with Rob

SUMMER CHURCH CAMP DATES ARE POSTED AT TALLOAKS.ORG

