“Dream” (First in the Series “Drawn In: Living the Creative Life with God”)
Matthew 3:13-17; Genesis 1:1-2; Luke 4:14-21; Acts 2:17
January 11, 2026 (Baptism of the Lord and Installation of Officers)
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Genesis 1:1-2
“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”
God created everything and “God saw that it was good.”

Matthew 3:13-17
Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Luke 4:14-21
Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.
When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Acts 2:17
In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Sermon

What are your hopes and dreams? At the dawn of a New Year, we sometimes ponder that question. What are our dreams for ourselves, our families, our professional lives, all our personal relationships, and our relationship with God. Sometimes we also consider our dreams for the world around us.

As Christians, we frame our dreams for us and the world in the context of dreaming of the Kingdom of God. We pray for and live into the Kingdom of God even now. We remember to pray as we do in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." All of this takes **"energy, intelligence, imagination, and love"** – a phrase we heard earlier in the vows our officers took as they were installed as elders in our church. "Energy, intelligence, **imagination**, and love."

We have heard today a few verses from Genesis 1. We have heard how God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. This required God's **energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.** God had a dream for creation. God "saw that it was good" and indeed it was. No one had to imagine a perfect world of *shalom*, wholeness, peace, harmonious relationships. It was so. "It was good."

But humans messed it up. They sinned/we sin, and the result was and is brokenness, disharmony, violence, prejudice, and hatred. It was the opposite of what God dreamed. Yet God did not abandon his creation. **God never lost energy, intelligence, imagination, and love for the world.** God promised that the Kingdom of Heaven – the Kingdom of God would come in its fullness one day.

At Jesus's baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus was publicly commissioned for his ministry on earth. He was clearly identified through the voice of God as the Son of God. The Holy Spirit descended upon him. In our scripture lesson about the baptism of Jesus, we hear that Jesus said of his baptism by John: "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) What does that mean?

As we look at Old Testament prophecies, including in Isaiah 42, we read that the coming Messiah will bring "justice to the nations, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

"To 'fulfill all righteousness' means nothing less than the fulfillment of this vision. Whereas modern audiences may think of righteousness primarily in terms of individual moral conduct, in Matthew, righteousness is focused on **restoration and relationships made whole."** (*Connections*, Year A, Volume, p. 174). It's the start of the New Creation.

We heard Jesus read other similar words of Isaiah in one of our New Testament readings. Jesus is in the Jewish synagogue. He's the scripture reader for the day. He reads these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim

release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Instead of just stopping there, Jesus said "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-19, 21).

It's significant to note that his hometown synagogue folks were perplexed that he was fulfilling prophecy – that he was the Messiah. But when he went on to tell Old Testament stories that illustrated that the promises were not just for them (the Israelites) but for **all people** they were enraged. In fact, they were so enraged they tried to kill him right then and there. Their plan was to throw him off a cliff. He escaped death . . . that time.

Needless to say, Jesus's ministry would require "energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. He had to keep the dream alive. He had to let love lead him. And love did lead him . . . straight to the cross. Through his suffering, death, and resurrection he reconciled the world and he continues to reconcile the world.

Interestingly, one of the other questions our elders answered this morning was: "Will you in your life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, **and work for the reconciliation of the world?"** That will surely take a lot of "energy, intelligence, imagination, and love." It is a tall order. (ordination/installation questions are from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Consitution, Part 2, *The Book of Order*)

It is no secret that our world is a long way from reconciliation, although I choose to trust that God in Christ is still at work in this world. I choose to believe and trust that one day this will be a reality when Christ comes again and creates the New Heaven and New Earth where God's righteousness and reconciliation will be known in its fullness.

I don't know about you, but right now many of us are weary and disheartened by all the events around us that demonstrate how far we are from the righteousness and reconciliation promised in Christ. (To be clear, I'm not suggesting that this is Christ's fault. It's on us.) It's hard to imagine things being better. It's hard to keep the dream alive. Some of us feel we are running out of energy, intelligence, imagination, and even love in the face of unrighteousness and brokenness within ourselves, our families, our nation, and our world.

I read this prayer yesterday:

"Holy God, I am tired!
Tired of the fear-filled news,
Tired of the cruelty toward neighbors,
Tired of the deafening silence from leaders,
Tired of always being on edge,
Tired of screaming into the void,
Tired of holding hope against despair.
Meet me in my tiredness, O God.
Meet me in the ache of these long days and breathe your strength into my bones. For the sake of your love. Amen." (Bishop Deon K. Johnson).

It is “for such a time as this” that we need to be more and more “Drawn In” to a relationship with God. It is “for such a time as this” that we need to remember that God created everything there is and that God is still creating. It is “for such a time as this” that we need to draw upon God’s energy, God’s intelligence/wisdom, God’s imagination, and God’s love. It is “for such a time as this” that need to be drawn into God’s Word and to renew our own baptismal covenant to join Jesus in his mission of justice, mercy, reconciliaton, and peace. It is “for such a time of this” that we need to be drawn into the light of Jesus so that we can continue to shine in our families, our schools, our workplaces, our church, community, and world. In this we will, through our baptisms, “fulfill all righteousness.” (reference to “for such a time as this” is from the Old Testament book of Esther)

The Presbyterian Church, in our constitution, says that “the great ends/purposes of the church are:
The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
The maintenance of divine worship;
The preservation of the truth;
The promotion of social righteousness; and
The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.”
(Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Consititution Part 2, *Book of Order,* the Great Ends of the Church)

All of this requires that we continue to Dream and to be Drawn into a deeper relationship with the living God. All of this requires the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love that only God can provide us.

In baptism, we are chosen by God, we are drawn into God’s wonder and **work**, and we are marked as Christ’s own forever.