

Happy mid-week!

This past week I have found myself immersed in working with graduation. My job at the Community College in Moorhead is to graduate all of the students from the College. I am in the middle of reviewing almost 800 student's academic records to make sure they have met all the requirements to receive their degree. I also am spending this week meeting with the High School graduates of Kirkebo and Nora so that has been very fun as well. Finally, I myself will be participating in my virtual commencement at the end of May as I finish my seminary journey. It's a time of excitement for all of us, a time for question and wonder for all of us as we figure out what the future holds and it's also a time of worry for all of them and for all of the rest of us too as we continue to navigate this changing world and all that is going on with this pandemic these days.

All of this brought me to choose the following story for our time together called *Follow your Dream* by Jack Canfield:

I have a friend named Monty Roberts who owns a horse ranch in San Ysidro. He has let me use his house to put on fund-raising events to raise money for youth at risk programs.

The last time I was there he introduced me by saying, "I want to tell you why I let Jack use my house. It all goes back to a story about a young man who was the son of an itinerant horse trainer who would go from stable to stable, racetrack to racetrack, farm to farm and ranch to ranch, training horses. As a result, the boy's high school career was continually interrupted. When he was a senior, he was asked to write a paper about what he wanted to be and do when he grew up.

"That night he wrote a seven-page paper describing his goal of someday owning a horse ranch. He wrote about his dream in great detail and he even drew a diagram of a 200- acre ranch, showing the location of all the buildings, the stables and the track. Then he drew a detailed floor plan for a 4,000-square-foot house that would sit on a 200-acre dream ranch.

"He put a great deal of his heart into the project and the next day he handed it in to his teacher. Two days later he received his paper back. On the front page was a large red F with a note that read, 'See me after class.'

"The boy with the dream went to see the teacher after class and asked, 'Why did I receive an F?'

"The teacher said, 'This is an unrealistic dream for a young boy like you. You have no money. You come from an itinerant family. You have no resources. Owning a horse ranch requires a lot of money. You have to buy the land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock and later you'll have to pay large stud fees. There's no way you could ever do it.' Then the teacher added,

'If you will rewrite this paper with a more realistic goal, I will reconsider your grade.'

"The boy went home and thought about it long and hard. He asked his father what he should do. His father said, 'Look, son, you have to make up your own mind on this. However, I think it is a very important decision for you.'

"Finally, after sitting with it for a week, the boy turned in the same paper, making no changes at all. He stated, 'You can keep the F and I'll keep my dream.'"

Monty then turned to the assembled group and said, "I tell you this story because you are sitting in my 4,000- square-foot house in the middle of my 200-acre horse ranch. I still have that school paper framed over the fireplace." He added, "The best part of the story is that two summers ago that same schoolteacher brought 30 kids to camp out on my ranch for a week." When the teacher was leaving, he said, 'Look, Monty, I can tell you this now. When I was your teacher, I was something of a dream stealer. During those years I stole a lot of kids' dreams. Fortunately, you had enough gumption not to give up on yours.'"

Don't let anyone steal your dreams. Follow your heart, no matter what.

Dreams. What do you want to be when you grow up? For most of us that seems like a question that we haven't had to think about or wonder about for a very long time. Although, I think if you look at me (beginning a new vocation in the middle of my life) – you just never know – you too may find a time when you are asking that question of yourself. I have a wonderful career at the College (30 years working with college students has been so amazing) and yet there just seemed to be something else that was pulling at me – or better yet calling to me.

I have a couple of fun facts – interesting historical moments – that may be surprising for you to hear.

Vince Lombardi – a very successful football coach who led the packers to multiple championships and super bowl wins – was told early on in his career that he possessed minimal football knowledge and lacked motivation but a football expert. Guess he had that wrong

Beethoven - a German composer and pianist; his music is amongst the most performed of the classical repertoire, and he is one of the most admired composers in the history of Western music – was told by his music teacher that he was hopeless. Thankfully we are blessed in our life by amazing music from this accomplished composer.

Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for lack of ideas. He filed bankruptcy several times before he opened Disneyland. Aren't we glad he didn't listen to his editor?

Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was not smart enough to learn anything. Thankfully that wasn't true, or we might all be sitting in the dark.

I am hoping that you can understand where I'm going with these facts – there is no limit to what you and I and others can be. Our only real limitations are our own dreams and desire to reach them.

There are many Bible verses that remind us that God created us all unique and wonderfully made – there are so many opportunities out there for us:

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

2 Timothy 1:7 - For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Romans 12:3 - For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Mark 9:23 - Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth.

I think the most important common denominator in all of these verses and all of our hopes and dreams is that God is in and amongst all that we do. Yes, we can be whatever we want to be – but it's nothing to BE if we don't hold and keep God at the center of it all.

As we watch and see the class of 2020 – whether in person or virtually be celebrated in these next few weeks – let us all be reminded of those days when we too had the world at our fingertips and couldn't wait to see what life was going to bring us. Let us also be reminded how important it will be for them and for all of us to continue to keep God in our hearts, in our minds, in our thoughts and in our dreams. God has promised us a life everlasting when our time here comes to an end but until that time – let's be excited to dream and wonder about what our lives hold and know that God is with us through all of it.

Let's pray:

Gracious and loving Lord, you have created us all in the image of you. Remind each, and every one of us that our lives are a continued time of learning – all of our adventures – even our mistakes – are lessons in life here until we can reunite with you in the Father's house. Help us to remember that there really is no better time than the here and now and that all that we can imagine can be ours. We thank you for all that you provide for us and pray that you will not only be present and guiding for those that are embarking on a life after this graduation time but also those that continue to find themselves pulled or called to something more in their own

lives. All of this, and whatever you feel we may need, we ask that you provide to us. In your loving name, Amen.

Finally – a few announcements

Reminder – we will be having service Sunday, May 24th but no Sunday service on May 31st.

Fun on Wednesdays – starting next Wednesday, May 27th – I will begin finding a fun and secret spot to broadcast our mid-week devotion. The fun is that you are encouraged to guess where I am at and keep track of each Wednesday. We will be calling for your answers the last week of June and for every right location you name you will be put into a drawing for a special gift. We thought it would be fun to add a little intrigue and mystery into these devotions and something that may give you a little fun in trying to figure out where my location is. We look forward to your guesses – and yes you can turn them in each week if you'd rather do that instead of the end of June by emailing them to perleyparish.org or myself at mjenson001@luthersem.edu

PS – If you are getting the services mailed to you there will be a picture included each Mid-week service for you too to guess where I'm planning on streaming from so you can play along as well.