

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams  
Isaiah 55:8-9  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
July 6, 2025  
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“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8, NRSV).

We heard Corinne read those words and you might have felt yourself respond, “Isn’t that the truth!”

Not that we are *trying* to distance ourselves from God, not that we don’t *want* to embrace the ways of God, but our experience says that somehow the ways of humanity seem to be *very* distanced from the ways of God. We look around the world and many feel further from God than ever before, or at least feel like *the world* is further from God. Right now, it seems natural to wonder where God is in all of this.

We see people who are hungry. We see children who rely on school lunch as their primary source of food and who struggle even more during the summer, especially with cuts to summer food programs. We see more and more people relying on food pantries. In a recent conversation with the Executive Director of the North Liberty Community Pantry, he shared that in 2020 2 out of every 10 people who used the pantry, used it as their primary food resource. But, currently 8 out of every 10 people using the pantry are using it as a primary food resource. In other words, rather than coming occasionally or to supplement other groceries at times like the end of the month, most customers are now visiting weekly and getting the bulk of their food from the pantry.

We see families being separated because of immigration status with even people who show up for scheduled appointments - as they work to get residency or citizenship through the official system - being arrested in the hallway outside those very appointments.

We see divisions deepening, both on very local levels as family members and neighbors find themselves unable to see past their differences, and on international levels as long standing allies struggle to find common ground, as new alliances are formed, and as nothing feels very certain.

We see people losing their rights to employment and housing that is free from discrimination, losing their rights to make decisions about their own bodies.

And it is easy to get overwhelmed by everything we see around us. Especially when we understand that there is a different vision for humanity, a different desire for how we live together, how we value each other, how we care for one another.

It is easy to get overwhelmed when the God we worship and the God we experience is one who we can only imagine is shaking their head at so much of what is happening.

And, as human beings, especially when we are overwhelmed, it is easy to lose our energy for dreaming. It is easy to step back from the abundance and bounty of our richest and biggest dreams and learn to simply accept what is, or to ask for less, or to simply be grateful that it isn't our rights that have disappeared or our pantry that is empty or our family member who has been detained.

But, as people of faith we are invited to keep on dreaming. In fact, we are invited not only to not to minimize our hopes and dreams, but to root ourselves in that which is *bigger* than even our wildest dreams, *more hopeful* than anything we have ever seen.

See, these few verses that we read today, they don't stand on their own. Rather they come as a word of hope to a people who knew what it was to struggle.

While the book Isaiah begins in a context of a corrupt time under an oppressive regime, the section we read from today comes later. It is a word of hope to a people who have known what it was to live in exile, to live under the thumb of corrupt power, to live in fear...but a people to whom the prophet speaks a word of hope and paints a picture reminding them of God's ultimate intention.

This chapter opens with that picture. Beginning at Isaiah 55:1, we hear:  
"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (NRSV).

A couple verses later the prophet says, "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant..." (Isaiah 55:3, NRSV).

That is who our God is. God is one who offers abundance to all. God is one who enters into covenant with us. God is one who paints pictures of another possibility.

So, where is this God, you might still be wondering?

And there are many conversations we can and should be having about who God is and how God does, or doesn't, work in the world.

Because too often our language and our actions reflect that we are sitting around powerless simply waiting for God to act. And if that is the case, then the question remains - where is God when it seems like the world is on fire?

But, *when* we remember that God created humanity and then invited us into a special relationship of stewardship and caretaking...

*when* we remember that God entered into covenant relationship with human beings and invited them - invited us - to be not only participants in God's vision, but those who shape the world to reflect it...

*when* we remember that God calls forth people to stand firm in God's dreams and to hold to account those who are corrupt and oppressing, who take from the poor to become the rich, who turn away the hungry and the homeless...

*when* we remember all of this, then we are reminded that *we* are essential to God's vision becoming reality.

So, if you have lost your energy to dream...

if your hope for an abundant life for all has been replaced by a resignation to scarcity...

if you don't even know how to wish for something different anymore...

then you are invited to enter into the lavishness of God's vision.

You are invited to hold tight to the far reaching love of God and to live in ways that reflect it.

You are invited to remember that God's justice is not retribution, but restoration.

You are invited to help shape this world, that God's kin-dom of radical welcome will finally come.

We may never fully understand God...we may never be able to wrap our minds or hearts around the fullness of God's intentions, but we are invited into the mystery of God's abundant love...to embrace it...to dream with it...to live in ways that help shape the world for it. And when we do, we are invited to experience the joy that comes with it.

Later in this same chapter we hear the words, "For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12, NRSV).

Friends, it is a picture we can barely even imagine. And yet, we are invited to do just that. We are invited to imagine it, to embrace the possibilities, to hold on to hope, and to keep dreaming and working that God's kin-dom will come. May it be so.