

Birthing the Dream

19 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians
Church on the Park | Mother's Day Sunday, 14 May 2017

Text: "So, then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

Theme: Birth the life-giving dream that God has planted inside you.

Intro: Earlier this year I shared with you about Joseph's life and the stages he went through to birth his God-given dream. First, was the giving of the dream by God. Second, the development of Joseph's character through God. Third, was the birthing of the dream as worship to God. Each of you will go through these stages to birth God's dream for your life. You'll also continually go through these stages in smaller cycles through your life. Today, inspired by Mother's Day, I want us to focus on birthing God's dream and how God works within you to bring about his will on earth.

1) Receive the Seed (James 1:21).

- In Genesis, **Joseph received the seed** of God's Word when he was **sleeping** through a **dream**.
 - And **he believed** the Word because he **spoke** it to his family.
 - It's critical that you speak what God has spoken to you. But watch out to not do so in a boastful fashion and to everyone.
 - Share it with **a few trusted people** that will help you get there.
- The **birthing** of a God-given dream **begins** with the **receiving** the seed.
- *What is the seed?* It is **God's Word** (Luke 8:11ff) [Use the bag of seeds]
- In **Philippians 2:12-13** Paul talks about **working out** your salvation.
 - This often **confuses** people because the Bible says that **salvation** does **not** come through **works**, but by **faith**.
 - *So what is Paul saying? How can you understand this passage?*
- There is a big **difference** between '**working for**' something and '**working out**' something.
 - '**Working for**' something means you **don't have** the thing, you need to **earn** it. You may work overtime, doing something you hate, just to get something.
 - **You don't 'work for' salvation.** You don't earn salvation. It's a **free gift**. Even your **calling**—the **dream** God has for your life—is **free**. You don't work for it. Instead, God has **chosen** it before the foundations of the world.
 - '**Working out**' something is different—you are working out what is already **in you**, what is already **yours**. When you are doing a **workout** you are strengthening your **muscles**. You are not 'working for' muscles, instead you are 'working out' muscles. You already have the muscles, you are just making them stronger.
 - It's like **pregnancy**. You have the seed already growing within you. There's no need to work for the seed. It's yours and the child is growing within. But you do need to **work the child out** of you. The child grows within and then you go into **labour** (work) to push him/her out.
 - In the same way, salvation—freedom from sin and hell—is yours. **God** is now **in you**. It's now about letting him **work out** of you.
- Let's go back now. *How do you receive the seed of God's Word/Will?*
 - Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a perfect example of this (Luke 1:26-38).
 - **Mary did not work for Jesus.** There was not even an act of physical intimacy. Jesus was a **free gift** to Mary, **initiated** by God.
 - Notice the '**fear and trembling**' in her voice and **response**.
 - This is **not** the **fear of punishment**, but the **fear of honouring God**.
 - In Mary we see a **response** that **honours** God.

- Listen: “And Mary said, ‘Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; **may it be done to me according to your word.**” (Luke 1:38).
- This is **how** you **receive** the seed of **God’s Word**. And receiving God’s Word leads to the birthing God’s promises.

2) Feed the Seed (Ephesians 5:29).

- When a **woman** is **pregnant**, if she **feeds herself**, she **feeds** the **baby**.
- **Taking care of yourself** is actually **taking care of the baby within**.
- As Paul said to Timothy, “**Watch your life** and doctrine closely...” (1 Tim. 4:16)
- While Paul calls you to **honour one another** as more important than yourself, you can’t do that, unless you are **caring for yourself**.
 - **Caring for yourself** is the foundation for **caring for others**. This is caring for yourself with a **purpose**.
 - God has life within you that only you can birth. **No one can do that for you**. People can help you, but **only you can carry your call and give birth to it**.
- ***Song of Songs 1:6**
- It’s **God at work within**.
 - God is forming his life in you to be birth through you.
- **Water** the seed and **guard** the seed.
- When you **don’t see** something **visibly** happening outside of you, you realise God is at work **within** you.
- It’s essential during this **time** that you keep a **good attitude**.
 - You **work out** your salvation through **fear and trembling—a spirit of honour**.
 - Keep an attitude of **honouring God and others** while you are going through the **process**.
 - Don’t neglect to care for yourself in Jesus.
- Remember God is in you—you will give birth.
- **Timing is everything**. When it’s time you will give birth.
 - It’s during the process that most people fall away.

3) Deliver the Seed (Luke 2:1-7)

- **Give birth** to the **life within**.
 - *How do you know when it’s time?*
 - You’ll just know. You’ll **feel** the inward **pressure** increase. You can’t hold the baby in any more.
 - You may have some ‘**false starts**’ like a **woman** who rushes to the **hospital** only to be turned back again.
- Here’s **a few lessons** you can learn through **Mary’s birth** (Luke 2:7).
 - **1) Tightly wrap the baby**.
 - *What do I mean?*
 - **Care** for the child. If you don’t care for the child, no one will. **Don’t expect** an **angel** to do it or God to magical clothe your dream. The Lord has made you his **instrument of love**.
 - **Wrap** the dream in the clothes of **God’s Word**. Nothing will keep your call **safer** or **warmer** than God’s Word. Also, tightly wrap the dream in **prayer**.
 - **Martin Luther** describes the Scripture—God’s written Word—as the clothes and manger of Christ. In Scripture, you will find the living Christ.¹
 - **2) Don’t despise the day of small things**.
 - The dream began **small, very small**. Jesus was born in a **manger**, **not** in a **palace**. Be **faithful** with the **little** that God gives you and he will increase it. **Don’t reject** the dream because it seems like nothing.
 - **3) Expect rejection, but don’t give up**.
 - “...there was **no room** for them in the inn”
 - **Don’t reject** your call **because others reject** it.
 - **4) Receive the Lord’s shepherds/pastors**

¹ See Endnotes

- God's **true shepherds** will **help** you. They are **with you in the manger**. They **speak** God's **Word** to you. They give you **vision** and to **hold on** to the **dream**. They give you **treasure** to ponder in your heart. They **recognise Jesus** with you.

Conclusion: There's three distinct stages to birthing a God-given dream. First, receive God's seed. Second, feed God's seed. And lastly, deliver God's seed. Everything God gives begins small, but don't give up.

END NOTES

“Therefore let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that He may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them.” (Martin Luther, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1545)