

In 1961 President Kennedy proposed that the United States put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Kennedy challenged our nation to think big. NASA responded. On July 20, 1969 Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed the Apollo Lunar Module Eagle on the moon. Armstrong was the first man to set foot on the moon. As he stepped onto the moon's surface, Armstrong said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Jesus challenged His Disciples and He challenges us to think big when it comes to His mission and ours, to redeem and restore the world.

The Disciples had bought into Jesus and His mission, even if they were exactly sure what that meant. They left their former way of life to follow a traveling preacher around Israel inspired by His vision for the Kingdom of God. I'm not sure they shared the same vision. Thinking Big about the Kingdom of God in Jesus' day meant the overthrow of the Romans who occupied the land with God's chosen Messiah sitting on the throne. They hoped that the Messiah would reverse their fortunes and transform them from paupers into rich power brokers. James and John, two of Jesus' inner circle of Disciples, wanted to have the top two spots in Jesus' administration.

Eight days before taking Peter, James and John with up the mountain for the Transfiguration, Jesus asked the Disciples, **"Who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah sent from God!"** (vs. 20) The Disciples didn't expect Jesus' response. While they may have only been thinking about the overthrow of the Romans, Jesus was thinking bigger, thinking about defeating sin, death and Satan. Jesus told them, **"The Son of Man must suffer many terrible things. He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead."** (vs.22) No surprise, Peter objected and Jesus had to put him in his place.

Eight days later, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him up a mountain. This was the ultimate in mountain high experiences. Jesus appearance changes while He was praying. Moses and Elijah joined Jesus in conversation. Moses was instrumental in the Exodus of the Israelites slave from Egypt. God used Moses to liberate the people and to bring them to the edge of the Promised Land. God also gave the Ten Commandments, the moral law, to Moses on Mount Sinai. Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of Israel who took on the corrupt King Ahab who promoted idol worship. God used Elijah to prove that Baal was nothing but an idol on Mount Carmel in the battle of the gods.

Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about His "Exodus." They were talking about Jesus' death and resurrection that would take place in Jerusalem. This would be a New Exodus because Jesus would set people free from slavery to sin and from Satan's control. While liberation from Roman dominance would only be temporary, the liberation Jesus won from sin, death and Satan are eternal.

God's big idea requires the cross and the resurrection. Jesus is the only one who has every kept God's laws perfectly. Disobeying God's commands is called sin. We all sin and deserve the death penalty. But Jesus took our sins upon Himself. He died in our place to pay the price for our sins and the sins of all people. But a dead Jesus doesn't do us any good. Jesus had to defeat death, the direct consequence of sin. He did that by rising from the dead. We remember and celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday.

We have read 1 Corinthians 15 the past three Sundays. This is the chapter that tells about the importance of the resurrection. Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. . . . But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died." (1 Cor. 15:17 & 20 NLT) No one and nothing can stop God.

Peter was thinking small. He wanted to stay on the mountain top with Jesus, Moses and Elijah. So Peter proposed building three shelters, one for each of them. Was Peter putting Jesus on the same level with Moses and Elijah? Not bad company, but not right. The mountain was wrapped in a cloud and God the Father spoke. "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." (vs. 35) Moses and Elijah were gone. Only Jesus was left.

The Father's voice revealed the truth that Jesus was not just another prophet, but that Jesus is the Son of God. He is the One who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He is the One who would fulfill God's plan to redeem and restore people to a right relationship with God. The voice confirmed the worlds of Jesus eight days earlier. His mission would go through the cross. Jesus would go there out of love. Jesus would complete His mission at the right time and place.

Jesus victory over sin and death remind us that anything is possible with God. When we look at the world we live in with the constant cycle of bad news, with a highly divided and politicized nation, with so many people living a broken life; we need to remember that this not the way things will always be. We live and work in the present in light of the future made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus invites us to dream big, to dream of transforming the community around us with God's love and forgiveness. We have been given a new life in Christ. We have been given the mission of bringing the Good News to the people around us. We could give into despair and say the world is becoming too secular and there is nothing we can do about it. That only leads us to abandon the mission and isolate ourselves from the world. We could fight back, attack those who reject Christ and in the process alienate those Jesus died for. Or we could embrace the mission, live out our Christian faith, and engage the world for Christ.

The early Christians embraced the mission God gave them and engaged the world around them. They became Ambassadors for Christ to the pagan world they lived in. They were inspired to stand up for their faith even in the face of persecution. They stayed behind in plague infested

cities at risk to their own lives to help those infected even when others fled and left the sick behind. They were the first to bring the Gospel message that would eventually spread through to all corners of the world.

Anything is possible for us when we are following the Lord and are working together to fulfill the mission He has given us. We have identified Peace as “A Family of Jesus Followers Making and Growing New Lives in Christ.” Our mission is to bring people into God’s family and to grow together as followers of Jesus Christ. The Values we have identified are the keys to fulfilling this mission.

- We value the Bible as God’s Word, the source of our Christian faith; motivation and inspiration for the Christian life.
- We value God’s love for us and for all people. God gives life to everyone. Jesus died to forgive and restore everyone to a right relationship with God. We too need to reach out in love to everyone around us. Anyone and everyone who wants to worship or explore the Christian faith is welcome here. The ministry of Peace extends to all the people that all of encounter in our lives.
- We value Genuine Relationships. That means connecting people with God; build strong relationships in the Christian community, and reaching out to connect with those outside our faith family. That is why we do so many things to reach out to and connect with so many different individuals and groups.
- We value healthy families, spiritually, emotionally and physically healthy families. We need to be a church that helps and supports today’s family regardless of what those families look like.
- We value cultural relevance. We need to do everything we can to speak and act in ways that clearly communicate with those in and outside our community.
- We value excellence, not perfection. Our goal is to do everything we can to the glory of God.

One final thought. If we will embrace the mission God gives to us, if we are willing to engage the world around us and if we work together to remain faithful to the Lord and to His Word, I believe the best days for Peace lie ahead. When we follow Jesus, there is nothing too imaginative, too daring, too audacious for us to consider because anything is possible with God.