

Fishing in the Kingdom

Matthew 4:12-22

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I had a lot of dreams as a little boy. Dreams of adventure, conquest, and battle. I dreamed of being a warrior. On Halloween I wanted to be Zorro. Mom put a blanket on my back, I got a stick for a sword, and I was *Zorro!*

A warrior.
A superhero.

My friends Duncan and Matt used to always play Batman and Robin. My heart so clearly remembers the day when all the boys at lunch chased Matt and Duncan behind the backstop and beat them up. It was pathetic. One minute they were Batman and Robin, and the next minute their faces were shoved in the dirt and streaked with tears.

And where was their friend Zorro? Hiding. Zorro was buried deep in my heart in fear and shame.

I got teased a lot back then. My dreams were constantly ridiculed. My nicknames were Decent and Pussy, and I was afraid a lot. So I buried Zorro deep in my heart, and I learned I had no business picking up a sword, for my dream of being a warrior was *pathetic*.

By Jr. High my dreams of adventure, conquest, and battle had been tamed. But I still couldn't wait to get home and watch reruns of Star Trek, to "boldly go where no man has gone before." I read that Star Trek has more fan clubs than any show in history, over 600 chapters. But have you ever been to a Star Trek convention?

Middle-aged men
With pot bellies
Dressed like Klingons and Captain Kirk,
Trying to live out childhood dreams . . .
It's *pathetic*.

Sometimes church feels that way. Do you ever really listen to stuff we say? "We're the army of God" (a rather pathetic army). Or on the feminine side, "We're the great Bride of Christ" (as if God would want to marry us). I mean, maybe we're just a bunch of pretenders—actors, and church has become our gig. So we play at church in order to satisfy our own, self-centered need for meaning, like middle-aged men all dressed up at a Star Trek convention.

The movie Galaxy Quest is all about that whole scene. It starts at a Galaxy Quest convention. In the movie, Jason Nesmith is an actor himself, who plays Commander Taggart in the cancelled TV show Galaxy Quest. Playing Commander Taggart was his dream come true. But now he and the cast no longer act on TV but in shopping malls and at Galaxy Quest conventions for middle-aged men, lonely women, and teenage geeks dressed like aliens and stuff. They do it because it's

a job. But Jason is still hanging on to his dreams. He excuses himself at one point in the convention and goes to the bathroom . . .

[Movie Clip]

Standing in the bathroom stall Jason overhears two young men laughing as they stand at the urinals.

1ST GUY: You're right. What a FREAK SHOW. This is fricking HILARIOUS.

2ND GUY: Yeah, what a bunch of losers. And those poor actors. They've done, like, WHAT for twenty years? I think Fred Kwan did a dog food commercial... Sad.

1ST GUY: Did you hear Nesmith up there? That's the saddest. I think he actually gets off on these nerds thinking he's a space commander. It's pathetic. And his friends...

2ND GUY: ... they HATE him. I know, did you hear them ragging on him?! "Commander furry!..."

1ST GUY: He has no idea that he's a laughingstock... Even to his buddies.

After they exit, an obviously disturbed Jason goes back to his table to autograph photographs. He's obviously deflated when a nerdy, young man named Brandon walks up and says:

BRANDON: In "The Quasar Dilemma," you used the auxiliary of deck b for Gamma override. But online blueprints indicate deck b is independent of the guidance matrix, so we were wondering where the error lies?

Irritated, JASON responds: It's a television show. Okay? That's all. It's just a bunch of fake sets, and wooden props, do you understand?

BRANDON replies: Yes but, we were wondering-

JASON yells: There IS no quantum flux and there IS no auxiliary... There's no goddamn ship. Do you get it?

All eyes are turned on him. The hall has become deathly quiet. Jason rises abruptly and exits through the hall.

Sorry for the language . . . but it's a biblical idea, that God has damned the ship. And maybe we ought to stop pretending.

Let's look at our text. Matthew chapter 4 beginning in verse 17. I hope you're following along with your own reading in Matthew . . .

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

A kingdom is a community, a civilization, a city. Whatever is surrendered and reconciled to the king is in his dominion. The king-dominion of God is the kingdom of Heaven, and Jesus came preaching: The kingdom is at hand. At hand means *at hand*, not 2000 years away. You can touch it, and it can touch you. (The New Jerusalem is coming down.)

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Peter and Andrew were fishermen. We know most about Peter. It appears that for Peter, fishing was much more than just a job. It was his life, even his dream. (In John 21 after Jesus is crucified, not knowing what to do Peter goes fishing.) He casts his net into the murky depths hoping to catch treasure.

Jesus calls to him: “I’ll make you a fisher of men.” That tells us . . .

- Jesus calls us. It’s not really our idea.
- He knows us when He calls us. He knows our hopes, dreams, and desires. He sees Zorro and Captain Kirk.
- He calls us as we are and where we are. He doesn’t say to Peter, “I’ll make you a Bible scholar.” He doesn’t say to Paul, “I’ll make you a fisherman.” He doesn’t even say *that* to James and John, who aren’t *casting* nets but *mending* nets with their father. But we do know James and John will mend the Church, and John, having left his father, will write most eloquently on the Heavenly Father.

You know, Moses and David were shepherds, and God made them shepherds of men. Paul was a Pharisee, a Bible scholar for selfish gain, and Jesus turned him into the Theologian of Grace, a Bible scholar for the sake of love. Mary Magdalene was a whore. Jesus showed her she was the beloved.

Perhaps you’re a businessman and Jesus doesn’t want to make you a fisher of men so much as a businessman of the kingdom. If it weren’t for some of those, there would be no building here, no budget here, and very little fishing going on here.

We’re so worried Jesus doesn’t really *know* us and that He’ll *change* us into something unnatural. That’s what the Church often does. Every believer must act the same, speak the same, dress the same . . . and that’s not natural.

To Peter the fisherman, Jesus said, “I’ll make you a fisher of men.” He didn’t say, “Never think of fishing again! Fishing is your *old* life. *Evil, bad* fishing!” Not at all. In fact, long before Peter *met* Jesus, when Peter was just a little boy in Capernaum pretending to fish, even then God was nurturing and refining the desires and skills of Peter’s heart. So just as he played at fishing as a boy, in joyful and natural preparation for fishing as a man, he now found he was playing at fishing as a man in preparation for being a fisher of men.

It appears there is a striking parallel between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. So when the New Jerusalem comes down they still recognize it’s Jerusalem. Yet it’s *not* Jerusalem; it’s totally new!

Jesus says, “Behold, I make all things new.”

A city or kingdom is a society of hopes, dreams, and desires. It’s made up of fisherman, shepherds, bakers, and candlestick makers. So whoever you are, if you belong to Jesus, He’s making you new. And He’s making His new kingdom even out of things that are old, like you . . . old hopes, dreams, and desires.

The kingdom at least partly consists of old lives made new. And that is a bit strange, because Jesus does say, “If you want to be my disciple pick up a cross—lose your life.”

At the start of Scripture we find that something has gone terribly wrong with our lives and desires. In the Garden of Eden (which means pleasure) Adam and Eve take the fruit of the tree, for it will make them like God. To make Adam and Eve like God is God's desire. And being like God should be *our* desire as well. But Adam and Eve pursued the desire in the wrong way. They pursued it out of doubt and fear. So God said the result was death, and He kicked them out of Eden. They lost their desires.

Many, many years later the Lord comes to old Abraham and Sarah and says, "Sarah will bear a son." We know that son is eventually Jesus. Well, Sarah laughs out loud saying, "I'm so old, shall I again have pleasure?" In Hebrew: "Shall I again have Eden?" God says, "Why did you laugh?"

Sarah had not only lost Eden, she'd lost *hoping* for Eden—desiring Eden. She had despaired of Eden.

A wonderful woman in our church called me this past week. She loves Jesus and works hard at serving Him. She told me that her marriage had been extremely difficult and that a few months ago she was sitting in church praying to God as we all sang, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." She prayed what she said she thought was a very noble kind of prayer, resigning herself to stop hoping for Eden, her desire. She prayed, "God, I'm willing to feel unloved."

And she told me, "Peter, I heard God answer back: 'Don't you *dare*. Don't you *dare*.'"

To give up on feeling loved is to give up on feeling God. And we are to seek God with all our hearts. We're tempted to think God just wants us to give up hope, give up on seeking. Jesus gave up His life but not His hope for living. Give up your life but not your hope for life. Jesus is the *The Life*. To just "lose your life" *period* . . . no hopes, no dreams, no desires . . . is exactly what Satan wants.

Yet if we simply just followed our own hopes, dreams, and desires, it would make Hell on earth. (Maybe it already has.) I might *hope* to be Zorro, but you'd end up with Dr. Evil. That's because all my dreams of adventure, conquest, and glory are all about *me*. They've all been hijacked by *me* and the economy of this world—the kingdom of this world. They may be good, but they're all flying in the wrong direction and will eventually crash into the Universal Trade Center which I've proudly placed in the center of my heart.

But maybe desires can be redirected and even made better . . . baptized and even made stronger.

Well, Jesus didn't simply say, "Lose your life," He said, "Lose your life for my sake and you will find it." It struck me this week that what I find is *it* (not another life). In order to find *it*, I must be able to recognize *it*. One day, or maybe for all eternity, I'll say with absolute joy, "There *it* is! There's my life, what I, uniquely I, have always wanted!"

Jesus said, "Peter, I'll make you a fisher of men. Follow me." It's a new direction. But Peter must drop his nets to follow, drop his way of filling his desire. To *really fish* he must stop fishing!

Why do we have to *stop* fishing in order to *fish*?
Why do we have to *surrender* our desires in order to *receive* our desires?
Why do we have to fish in the Sea of Galilee in the *first* place?
Why are we born in Old Jerusalem in the *first* place?
Why must we live in this world of futility *at all*?

God has us fish and then takes the fish away.
God has us build a house, and then it burns down.
God has us marry a lover, and then she cheats and leaves.
God has us live, but everything dies.

“He giveth and he taketh away.” Why?
“Fish, Peter, but to really fish, stop fishing”?
It’s like He’s teasing us.

Is God teasing us? Is He a tease? Well, you know I love it when my wife’s a tease. She doesn’t tease like the kids at school teased. They intended their teasing for evil, but my wife intends it for good.

We’ll go on a date and she’ll wear a sexy, little dress, and I’ll want to grab her right there in the restaurant, but she won’t let me . . . “Get away!” She’s teasing me so that by the end of the night a small, little passion in this tired, middle-aged husband has turned into a raging furnace of desire! Then she gives her whole self to me, and I don’t enjoy her a *little* but a *whole lot*!

Perhaps God is teasing us like that, and eternity is our wedding night. Remember the New Jerusalem is a Bride prepared for

her Groom. I like *my* bride prepared with a whole lot of longing . . . for me.

Maybe this world is full of appetizers in preparation for the Great Banquet. You know, the purpose of appetizers is to make you more hungry, to inflame your desire. But if you stuff yourself with appetizers, you miss the meal. This world is full of appetizers, but the Host only lets us have a few. Perhaps God is building a longing, drawing us deeper. “He giveth and taketh away” to build a *hunger*, to make us hunger and thirst for righteousness, love, and life . . . to make us hungry for *Him*.

So the danger is that our growing desires will scare us and we’ll give up the quest—give up hope.

- The danger is that I’ll say to my bride, “I can’t *take* this any longer! I’m *leaving*! I’m going to go watch football and drink beer until I forget about you and your little dress!”
- The danger is that I’ll say to the Host, “I’m not waiting for the Great Banquet! I’m going to McDonald’s to slam Big Macs until I satiate my desire!”

- The danger is I'll try to satisfy my dream for adventure on Vail Mountain rather than Mt. Zion.
- The danger is I'll be satisfied with Old Jerusalem rather than seeking the New Jerusalem.
- The danger is I'll try to satisfy my dream for conquest on Wall Street rather than on the golden streets.
- The danger is I'll try to satisfy my dream for warfare in the Navy rather than in God's Kingdom.

That is, I'll try to satiate my dreams and desires in anything less than the best.

And the best is the Kingdom of God.
 And the Kingdom of God is the will of God.
 And the Kingdom of God is *in* God.
 And the Kingdom of God is even *at hand*.

The danger is that Peter will settle for fishing for fish in the Sea of Galilee, because fishing for men in the kingdom is just a little more than He can dare to desire or believe. And it certainly will require more than he thinks he has to give.

The danger is that he'll settle for *pretending* to fish . . . rather than really living his God-given dream *to fish*.

In the movie Galaxy Quest Jason Nesmith despairs of his dreams and desires. He leaves the convention and tries to drown his hopes in a bottle of whiskey. In the morning, real space aliens show up at his back door. They are Theramins from the Clatune Nebula, and for decades they've been receiving transmissions of Galaxy Quest reruns in deep space. They think the reruns are "historical documents."

They are so impressed with the courage, honor, and friendship of the Galaxy Quest crew, they've proceeded to build an entire civilization based on the Galaxy Quest transmissions: a kingdom entirely real and exactly parallel to the false reality on earth on TV.

Well, the Theramins are being destroyed by the evil emperor Sarris. In desperation they've come to Earth in hope that the brave Commander Taggart and his crew can save their people from destruction. They don't know Commander Taggart and his crew are pretenders. And Commander Taggart doesn't know *they* are real Theramins. He thinks they're middle-aged groupies there to pick him up for a gig that he'd forgotten because he was hung over.

Jason falls asleep before he's beamed up into space, so now he wakes up in the Theramin spaceship thinking it's just a gig (kind of like when we play church and then wake up to the kingdom).

[Movie Clip]

A door slides open and Jason and the others enter the command deck....It's straight out of the TV show. Blinking lights, consoles, the cool old tech displays... but a bit dark. Jason looks around, genuinely impressed, still wearing his glasses.

JASON: Not bad. Usually it's painted cardboard boxes in a garage.

They lead him to the Commander's chair. He sits.

TEB: Sir, we apologize for operating in low power mode, but we are experiencing a reflective flux field this close to the galactic axis.

JASON: No problem. This thing have a cup holder?

EXCITED ALIEN: (hands Jason a clipboard) The situational analysis, Commander.

JASON: What's your name?

EXCITED ALIEN (perplexed) ...Glath, sir.

Jason signs his autograph and hands it back. "There you go."

NAVIGATOR: We're approaching in five ticks, sir. Command to slow?

Jason looks toward the front window/view screen. Stars move past in a familiar display.

JASON: Sure, set the screen saver on two. (The navigator looks confused.) Sorry. Sorry. Didn't mean to break the mood. Slow to Mark 2, lieutenant.

A ship appears on the screen, growing closer. It is a menacing craft, sharp and jagged, with a gargoyle shaped figurehead. Then the viewscreen fuzzes to life with an image of... Sarris - He's ugly and green hued. Black sharp teeth. A metal hand... He hisses... There is a beat as the aliens take in the sight, trying to well their courage.

SARRIS: I see fear. That is expected. (His voice resonates.) Ah, they bring a new Commander... Such a cowardly species. Not even your own kind... No matter. Here are my demands, and I would suggest, Commander, that you think well before speaking a word, because these negotiations are... tender.. and if I do not like what I hear there will be blood and pain as you cannot imagine...

Jason takes a sip of coke and checks his watch.

SARRIS: First, I require the Omega 13... Second-

JASON: (blasé, like a laundry list) Okey dokey, let's fire blue particle cannons full. Fire red particle cannons full. Fire gannet magnets left and right. Fire pulse catapults from all chutes. And throw this thing at him too, killer.

He hands the gunner the empty coke can, then before even waiting for the weapons to reach their target... he exits!

HALLWAY—Jason emerges and looks both ways trying to get his bearings. Several of the aliens chase after him as he enters the corridor, exchanging stunned glances, trying to absorb the magnitude of what just happened.

MATHESAR: Commander?... Where are you... going?

JASON: Home.

MATHESAR: You... You mean Earth?

JASON: Yeah. "Earth." Time to get back to "Earth," kids.

He turns a corner. Jason is oblivious to the muffled sounds of explosions, traces of the demolition going on outside.

MATHESAR: But Commander... The negotiation... You... You... You fired on him. ..

JASON: Right. Long live... What's your planet?

MATHESAR: Theramin.

JASON: Long live Theramini. Take a left here?

MATHESAR: But what if Sarris survives?

JASON: Oh, I don't think so. I gave him both barrels.

MATHESAR: He has a very powerful ship. Perhaps you would like to wait to see the results of-

JASON: I would but I am REALLY running late and the 134's a parking lot after 2:00. But listen, the guy gives you any more trouble, just give a call...

Mathesar produces a walkie talkie device for Jason.

MATHESAR: An interstellar vox.

JASON: Thanks.

Mathesar looks him in the eye. A tear starts down his cheek. He hugs Jason, then shakes his hand sincerely.

MATHESAR: How can we thank you, Commander. You- You have saved our people.

JASON: It was a lot of fun. You kids are great.

The others shake his hand, thanking him as they enter the Interstellar Pod Room, a room with a very high circular ceiling. The aliens continue thanking Jason as they lead him to the center of the room. Jason realizes he's left all alone in this strange room with no visible doors. Jason is suddenly aware that he is standing on a glowing red disk.

JASON: Wait. Where's the limo?

Suddenly a clear cylinder rises from the disk and conforms around him, encasing him in a clear bullet shaped container. There is only an instant to register surprise as the ceiling divides and an awe-inducing rotating starfield is revealed... The walls pull back around him. Jason finds himself surrounded by the infinite vastness of space. And his face is a mask of horror in the split instant Jason in his pod is rocketed forward into space. We pull back slowly from the iris of Jason's eye. He is now standing on the red disk in the middle of his own back yard. He stands there in shock, teeth chattering, shivering in wave after wave from the incomprehension of what he's just experienced, unable to move from the spot, paralyzed by fear.

I honestly think Galaxy Quest is one of the most profound representations of the Christian doctrine of sanctification that I've ever witnessed outside Scripture. If you saw the movie, you know that Jason convinces the crew to go back with him. When they find out it's not just a gig, they're terrified and want to go back to doing gigs in Van Nuys. It's one thing to dream of "boldly going where no man has gone before," battling evil aliens and saving planets from destruction, but it's another thing to actually *do* it.

They want to go back to *playing* Galaxy Quest for a few bucks an hour, but now they're forced to actually *live* their dreams for love of the Theramins who are suffering.

In this process of loving, their dreams are nurtured and baptized with fire—adversity. At one point evil Sarris has "sifted Jason like wheat." Jason confesses in despair that he's just an actor—a pretender. But the Theramins are convinced he's "more than he knows" or admits.

You need to confess your dreams and desires to Jesus and confess you are a pretender. But you see, Jesus is convinced you are "more than you know." Jesus says you're "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," the army of God, His beautiful Bride, and His very dwelling. So there is an "immeasurable greatness of power in you." When you love, you are "born of God and know God." You are His very own body.

So Jesus says, "Peter, follow me, and I'll make you a fisher of men." "Drop this gig, and I'll show you what fishing is all about." Peter goes on a quest—a journey—with Jesus. Three years later his dreams have grown and Satan has "sifted him like wheat." Peter has utterly failed. He thinks he's a pretender. Jesus has been crucified, and Peter is back to fishing in Galilee. But now he can't even *catch fish* in his old lake!

In the morning the resurrected Jesus appears on shore and says, "Try the other side of the boat." Peter catches 153 fish! He leaves the fish and swims to Jesus. Three times Jesus asks him, "Do you love me more than these?" Peter says, "Yes." In a few weeks he'll preach on Pentecost and catch 3000 men. He casts his net to the deep and hauls in the riches of the kingdom. For, you see, his desire for fishing had been nurtured and purified, that is, baptized and sanctified with fire. He fishes now in love, in Jesus.

In Galaxy Quest the crew saves the Theramins not because it's a gig for themselves, but because they've learned to love others. Their dreams of adventure, conquest, and battle are all turned around. They land the starship back at the Galaxy Quest convention, but they're no longer actors and pretenders. They're the *real deal*.

So what am I saying?

Don't be afraid of your hopes, dreams, and desires. They're not pathetic, but, in fact, somewhere in them I'll bet Jesus is calling you out. Don't simply repress them but surrender them.

Surrender your desires so He can enlarge your desires and baptize your desires with fire . . .

. . . turn your desire for intimacy from lust to love . . .

. . . turn your desire for adventure, conquest, and glory from pride to hope . . .

. . . turn your desire for pleasure and riches from greed to faith.

Faith, hope, and love abide far stronger than lust, pride, and greed. Let Him turn your dreams to Him—His kingdom. Listen closely: All that you truly dream about and desire is *Him*. And He's making your heart large enough to receive Him.

Lately in worship I keep seeing a picture, or dreaming a dream, of *me* picking up a huge sword. And it's not pathetic. I think it's Jesus calling to Zorro, who was buried in the first grade, "Come out, Zorro! I have a sword for you to wield. The sword is my Word, and you are my warrior. And we will do battle with the dragon for the love of God!"

You see, ever since Halloween in the first grade, and even before, I've been dreaming of Jesus. And my dreams are becoming real. I'm being made in His image and likeness. I'm being made in Him. Jesus said, "Follow me, Peter, and I'll make you a fisher of men." Peter couldn't see it then, but Jesus was the real fisherman. And even then He had hooked Peter's heart and was reeling him in.

Come to this table and He's reeling you in. He *has* been all along.

So on the night that Jesus was betrayed, having given thanks He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given for you. Take and it. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same manner, after the supper, He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

Just think of it — You come to this table and take His body and His blood, and He's *in* you. And *you* are in *Him*. Each one of you are uniquely part of His body. You are *in* Him, the Great Savior, the Great Lover, the Great Warrior, the Great Fisherman. And He's calling you out . . .

“Let’s go fishing!
Let’s go hunting!
Let’s go dancing!
Let’s go cut the head off the dragon!
For you are so much more than you know.”

Amen.

[Movie Clip]

We see Brandon, from the Galaxy Quest Convention, sitting in his bedroom. Brandon looks at his model with a sigh. Suddenly he hears a familiar tone. He cocks his head and turns to... the Interstellar Vox sitting on his table. He starts to turn away, but it beeps again. Slowly he reaches out, takes it in his hand and flips the switch. We hear Jason's voice.

JASON: Hello?... Hello is anyone there?...

Brandon stares at the thing, then looks around his room for signs of a practical joke. He speaks into it quietly.

BRANDON: ... Hello?

JASON, holding his Vox, nods to Gwen... "Got him."

JASON: This Is Jason Nesmith. I play Commander Peter Quincy Taggart of the USEA Protector.

BRANDON'S ROOM—Brandon stares at the vox for a very long moment.

BRANDON: ... Yes?

JASON: We accidentally traded Vox units when we bumped into each other on Saturday.

BRANDON: Oh... Oh, I see. Oh.

JASON: What's your name, son?

BRANDON: Brandon.

JASON: Brandon, I remember you from the convention, right?... You had a lot of little technical observations about the ship, and I spoke sharply to you...

BRANDON: Yes, I know, and I want you to know I thought about what you said... I know you meant it constructively but...

JASON: It's okay. Listen-

BRANDON: ... But I want you to know that I am not a complete braincase, okay? I understand completely that it's just a TV show. There is no ship, there is no Beryllium Sphere, no digital conveyor... I mean, obviously it's all just a-

JASON: It's real, Brandon. All of it, It's real.

BRANDON (no hesitation): I knew it!... I KNEW it!...

JASON: Brandon... The crew and I are in trouble and we need your help.

I just want to tell you, you're not a complete braincase. The kingdom of God really *is* at hand. And Jesus wants you to live there now, by faith.

“So, Lord God, I confess to you that I’m Brandon. But, Jesus, I thank you that you’ve allowed me to hear your call even in my room, when I secretly despise myself and you say, ‘Peter, it’s all real. It’s all real.’ And you call me out. Lord Jesus, call us out.”

Maybe as I was preaching you were thinking of yourself, of dreams, desires, and hopes . . . what you always wanted to dress up like as a little kid. What was it?

An army sergeant? A ballerina? A treasure hunter?
Could you give those hopes and desires to Jesus?

Princess? Bride? Zorro?

Do you hear a voice whispering out of the shadows — “This is pathetic”? That’s the Evil One. Your dreams are *not* pathetic. (And I believe the Evil One cannot create dreams. He can only make nightmares out of dreams.) Those dreams are the very first whisper of a new creation. And God is making you in His image. He is so large, and He is so good, and He is so big that He is *all* those things:

Ballerinas that dance across the stars,
Glorious, lovely brides,
Treasure hunters seeking gold,
Warriors battling the Ancient Dragon.

You are His body. And He’s making you. So surrender your desires and listen for His call. And let’s go fish for men, dancing before the world, hunting for treasure, and battling the dragon.

“You are my people, you are my body, you are my holy nation, you are my chosen race, you are the royal priesthood, you *are* the army of God.”

And we *will not fail*, because our Father is the author of the story. And what He has begun He will complete. So never stop hoping . . . in Jesus, amen.

Further Reading

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:17-20

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. ... When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

John 21:3-8, 15

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ... For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. ... Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever--therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 1:26, 3:5-6, 22-24

They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The Lord said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure ('Eden' in Hebrew)?" The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Genesis 18:9-15

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Psalms 16:11

In moments of doubt I cry, "Could God Himself create such lovely things as I dreamed?" "Whence then came thy dream?" answers Hope. "Out of my dark self, into the light of my consciousness." "But whence first into thy dark self?" rejoins Hope. "My brain was its mother, and the fever in my blood its father." "Say rather," suggests Hope, "thy brain was the violin whence it issued, and the fever in thy blood the bow that drew it forth--But who made the violin? and who guided the bow across its strings? Say rather, again--who set the song birds each on its bough in the tree of life, and startled each in its order from its perch? Whence came the fantasia? and whence the life that danced thereto? Didst thou say, in the dark of thy own unconscious self, 'Let beauty be; let truth seem!' and straightway beauty was, and truth but seemed?"

Man dreams and desires; God broods and wills and quickens. When a man dreams his own dream, he is the sport of his dream; when Another gives it him, that Other is able to fulfill it.

George MacDonald, *Lilith*

The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and to nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. ...

These things--the beauty, the memory of our own past--are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself, they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Augustine emphasized, "The whole life of the good Christian is a holy longing. What you desire ardently, as yet you do not see." So; "let us long because we are to be filled. ... That is our life, to be exercised by longing." ...

The fact is, at this point in our journey, we have only three options: (1) to be alive and thirsty, (2) to be dead, or (3) to be addicted. There are no other choices. Most of the world lives in addiction; most of the church has chosen deadness. The Christian is called to the life of holy longing.

John Eldridge, *The Journey of Desire*

All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

Romans 8:22-25, Eugene Peterson, *The Message*

Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 16:25b

And I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ...And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 21:2, 5

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:28