

Note: The sermon below will be delivered by the Rev. Caleb Kim on Sunday, January 19, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.

Title: Decision – Time to Dream (II)

Have you seen the vision God has given you for 2025? Have you dreamed a dream that God wants you to fulfill in this new season? And, speaking of new beginnings, how are our New Year's resolutions going so far? Some of us might say, "I'm doing great with everything I set out to do this year." But some of us might hesitate to answer since we feel the challenges of keeping those resolutions. Here is the good news: The Lord, our God, is a God of second chances. When we admit our failures and turn to Christ for His mercy and strength, He gives us new opportunities to rise again, to get back on track, and to keep moving forward with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Two Sundays ago, we launched a sermon series called "Time to Dream," where we learned about the importance of having our God-given dreams and visions. When the Holy Spirit is at work in us—when we repent, trust in God, and open our hearts—Christ gives us the supernatural power and endurance to attempt great things for Him and to expect great things from Him. The Triune Lord will help us see those dreams and visions come to life as we step into this new chapter of our spiritual adventure.

In the first part of this series, I shared an illustration about building physical muscles—while we are still young or at least before we get too old! Our bodies have over 600 muscles, many of which are located in our hips and thighs. These muscles are foundational for how we maintain balance in walking upright. Recently, I have had to pay more attention to my body. After playing badminton, I started noticing some soreness in my knees. As you know, this sport requires a lot of movement—turning, jumping, and lunging. That is why the knees can be burdened during play if they are properly supported. A month ago, I shared my knee issues with my eldest son, Caleb Jr. who is a physiotherapist. He gave me some great advice. He said, "Dad, you need to strengthen your thigh and hip muscles." After explaining the joint system, I gained a better understanding of how the muscles around the knees work together. The stronger my hip and thighs muscles are, the less pressure is put on my knees during badminton. These strengthened muscles help absorb more impact before it reaches the knees.

At first, I thought that people with knee, hip, or back pain just needed rest. And in some cases, that is true because proper rest is important for healing. But I have learned that physical therapy and targeted exercises can help. In many cases, when patients are diligent about strengthening the muscles around their joints, they find they do not need pain relief medication—or even surgery. As I have mentioned before, our physical muscles naturally decrease after a certain age, say around 50. That is why it is crucial to keep strengthening them, especially in our hips and thighs... Since I made the decision to follow through with those prescribed exercises, I have noticed less soreness in my knees after playing badminton. I can even see that my thighs are a bit bigger and stronger than before. So, strengthening the right muscles can make a big difference in our adventurous and active lives.

As I have also mentioned before, the Bible can be called a “Dream” book. It contains many visions and dreams that God gave to His people. One of the divine characteristics God has given us as His masterpieces is the ability to dream. In the beginning of creation, God had a vision. He created the world out of nothing and gave humanity a dream: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...” (Genesis 1:28). That was God’s dream for us—to rule over the earth and to flourish. After giving that vision to Adam and Eve, our first spiritual ancestors, God made the decision to provide everything they needed to make that dream come true.

Similarly, when God’s people receive visions, they are also called to make the decision to take the necessary steps to fulfill those dreams. Think about the wonderful examples in the Bible. God gave Abraham the vision of becoming the father of a great nation, and Abraham made the decision to leave his homeland and follow God’s call. God gave Noah the dream of saving humanity from the flood, and Noah made the decision to build the ark. God gave Moses the vision of leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and Moses made the decision to stand up to Pharaoh. Jesus gave Peter the vision of being the foundation of the Church, and Peter made the decision to follow Jesus, no matter the cost. Mary was given the vision of being the mother of the Saviour, and she made the decision to say, “I am the Lord’s servant... May Your Word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38). And Paul received the vision of becoming an apostle to the Gentiles, and he made the decision to devote his life to the Gospel, no matter the persecution. In all these examples, after receiving their God-given dreams, these people made the decision to act on them, to follow God’s direction, and to fully trust Him despite uncertainties and challenges.

With this introduction, I want us to focus on the second theme in our “Time to Dream” series: “Decision.” It is not enough to just have a dream. We need to make the decision to fulfill it. Whether we realize it or not, every day, we are at various crossroads. We are making decisions—big and small—about which direction we will choose. This morning, I want us to consider some of God’s principles for making wise decisions. I also want us to think about how we can apply these principles to our faith journey.

Firstly, we are called to make a decision before the Lord—not just for ourselves, but also for our loved ones. In our Old Testament reading this morning, we find the story of Joshua. Before he was called to be with the Lord at the age of 110, Joshua gathered all the people of Israel in a town called Shechem. He reminded them of all that God had done for them, one by one—starting with God’s presence with their ancestors, from Abraham through to Jacob and Joseph. Joshua recounted how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land under Moses’ leadership. He also reminded them of God’s provision in the wilderness and His protection during their battles.

After reflecting on all of God’s blessings, Joshua made a bold declaration in front of the people—including himself, who had dreamed a happy and joyful living in their God-given land in the days to come. Despite the potential difficulties he might encounter down the road, Joshua courageously and confidently said, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). This was not just a decision for himself—it was a decision for his household, his family, and future generations. He chose to worship God alone in the land that God had promised them. Joshua’s decision was not just for him; it was generational. It impacted his life, his family’s life, and the lives of their descendants. When the people of Israel heard Joshua’s decision, they too

declared, “We will serve the Lord,” because they remembered God’s presence, provision, and protection in their own journey. Joshua’s firm commitment inspired them to make their own commitment.

Like the people of Israel, we, too, as people of faith, are daily asked to choose whom or what we will serve. In making these decisions, we need to reflect on what the Lord has done for us and for our loved ones. We need to think about who we are in God’s eyes and recommit our hearts fully to Him. Like Joshua, we are called to make decisions that do not just affect us, but also our families, our loved ones, and future generations. Sometimes we might hear—even say—to our loved ones: “I know it is hard, but will you please do this for me?” Or “Can you please choose to do this for me?” Once again, when we choose to do what is right, whether we realize it or not, we influence those around us. We want our loved ones to live healthy, happy lives, don’t we? When we make decisions that are good for us, they benefit our loved ones too.

As I reflect on my own life, I am more aware that I am leaving a legacy—whether significant or small—for those around me, especially my loved ones. I want to make decisions that honor God and bless those who come after me. Today, I have decided to commit the second half of my life to the Lord and His people. It may be challenging, but God calls me to pursue my God-given dreams—not just for my own sake, but also for the sake of those I love. I am praying that God will help me fulfill the visions He has given me, just as he has done in the past, or even more abundantly than before. In the same way, when we envision a future of good health, we need to decide to take care of our bodies through regular physical and mental exercises. When we do this, not only will we be happier and healthier ourselves, but our loved ones will also be glad to see us growing stronger, sharper, and more spiritually mature in Christ. As we go forward, we need to remember that the choices we make today will impact our future and the future of those we love. When our loved ones look back at our lives, they will appreciate the footprints we have left behind—whether they are big or small.

Secondly, we are called to ask God in prayer to help us keep our decisions before Him, with His strength and guidance. In our Gospel reading today, we encounter a powerful conversation between Christ and the father of a demon-possessed boy. After Christ’s transfiguration on the mountain, the father had the chance to meet Jesus and ask for healing for his son. Jesus asked the father, “How long has he been like this?” (Mark 9:21). The father replied that his son had been suffering from this demon-possessed condition since childhood. The father then expressed his God-given dream for his son’s healing. He shared his vision with Jesus and asked for His compassion, saying, “If you can...” Jesus encouraged him to act in faith and promised: “Everything is possible for one who believes” (Mark 9:23).

But what was the father’s response to Jesus’ promise? He immediately cried out to Jesus: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). This was a powerful moment. Jesus was pleased not only with the father’s faith but with his honesty, his humility, and his willingness to fight against his own doubts in prayer. The father knew he could not do it on his own, so he made a plea with Christ to help strengthen his faith. Like the boy’s father, we also may have God-given dreams for ourselves and our loved ones. Perhaps we dream of healing, overcoming obstacles, or seeing breakthroughs in our faith journeys. But just like the father, we might also find ourselves struggling with doubt. We might ask God, “How long, Lord? How long do I have

to keep praying for my loved ones? How long do I have to wait for my dreams to come true?" Or, we might ask, "Why, Lord? Why did this trouble happen to me or someone I love? Why have You allowed me to struggle in this way for so long?" The father was likely wrestling with these same questions—the "how-long" and "why" statements. But instead of keeping his doubts to himself, he brought them to Jesus. He poured out his heart to Jesus. The father knew that only Jesus could heal his son. By faith, he made the decision to trust Jesus with his dream and to ask for God's help in prayer to overcome his lack of faith. Jesus, seeing the father's heart, granted the healing that the father dreamed for his son.

Friends, we too often find ourselves weak, unsure, or overwhelmed by unbearable challenges. We may feel like we cannot deal with these problems, whether they are related to ourselves or to our loved ones. But just like that father, we are invited to bring our concerns to God in prayer and ask for His help and guidance. Are we struggling with doubt in God's presence, provision, or protection in certain areas of our lives? Do we feel like our God-given dreams are too big or impossible to achieve on our own? Friends, God wants us to approach Him just as the father did—with honesty, humility, and faith. What decision have we made to fulfill our God-given dreams in the days ahead? Accomplishing our dreams might seem impossible without the help of the Lord.

I am reminded of the famous hymn and want to read you a portion of the lyrics: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful? Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer." Are we not thankful to know what a friend we have in Jesus Christ? In any situation, we can pray to Him, asking Him to help us and our loved ones overcome our lack of faith. We can ask Him for His supernatural strength to help us keep our decisions and accomplish our dreams. The Lord is still at work, doing wonderful things for us and for those we love. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What a comfort it is to know that we are never alone on this journey.

Thirdly, we are called to make a decision to move against fear by faith in Christ. Fear is often at the root of many of the challenges we face in our spiritual journeys. In our Epistle for today, the Apostle Paul reminds us of our identity as followers of Christ. He says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us... Nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that it is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8: 31-39). In this passage, Paul asks a series of profound "Who" questions: "Who can be against us? Who will bring any charge against us? Who shall separate us from the love of God?" These questions might make us afraid to make any decisions. As we face crossroads in life, we might also be filled with "what-if" questions, wondering what challenges might arise in the days ahead if we make the wrong choice. It is natural to pause and consider potential difficulties when making decisions. It is wise to ask ourselves, "What if this happens or that happens?" These "what-if" questions can help us prepare and make the best choice possible. There is nothing wrong with asking them—as long as we use them as guidelines, not as roadblocks. But here is the truth we need to remember: we cannot solve all the "what-if" circumstances. We do not have the full picture, but God does. God is the Creator of the universe, the One who knows everything from the beginning to the end in every matter we face on our faith journey. He is the Way Maker, the Miracle Worker, and the Promise Keeper.

Sometimes, I hear people, including myself, say, “I am too old to dream for God. I am too young to accomplish His vision.” These “if I only” excuses are not new. If we look at the Bible, we will see similar excuses from some of the greatest figures of faith. Moses felt too old to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and doubted his abilities (Exodus 4:10). Jeremiah felt too young and inexperienced to speak for God (Jeremiah 1:6). Fear often makes us hesitant. It whispers doubts, especially about the unknown, and can keep us from stepping forward in faith. But here is what we need to remember: we do not need to understand the whole system of God’s plan for our lives. We do not have to have every answer to move forward. What we need to do is face our fears—not by our own strength, but by faith in Christ, like the Apostle did despite the many challenges in his faith journey. Today is the day to make a decision to dream and to move forward, regardless of the uncertainties.

There is no “perfect” moment to make a decision without fear. We live in an imperfect world, and we are imperfect people. The key is to act by faith, trusting that God is with us—even in the midst of fear. When we hold onto God’s hand, we can challenge ourselves to move forward, and fear does not have to control us. We can make decisions in faith, believing that with God, all things are possible. And here is the beautiful truth: when we act in faith, those fears begin to lose their power. As we see things through the lens of God’s perspective, the “scary” things often are not as overwhelming as they seemed before. The things that once filled us with anxiety can become less intimidating when we trust that God is in control of every situation. So, friends, what are you afraid of today? What is holding you back from moving forward in faith to fulfill your God-given dreams and visions. God wants us to remember our true identity: We are more than conquerors through Christ.

In conclusion, I want to leave you with this thought: What is the best legacy we can leave for our loved ones and our descendants? I believe the best legacy we can leave is a life of physical, mental, and spiritual health—a life lived joyfully and fulfilling before the Lord until He calls us home. In the beginning, when God created the universe, He looked at everything He made and declared, “It was good.” When He created human beings, He said, “It was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God has a vision for each of us to live a healthy, happy life in Him. But our God-given dreams will not come true unless we make the decision to pursue them by faith. These dreams are not just for us; they are also meant to impact our loved ones and generations to come. To fulfill these visions, we must commit to spending time with God through prayer and reading His Word, seeking His guidance and strength. We also must care for our bodies, God’s temples, by committing to regular physical and mental exercise—with the help of the Holy Spirit.

As spiritual descendants of Abraham, we have already begun this new year. The choice is before us: the decisions we make today will shape our future. They will determine the path we walk and the destination we reach. So, what decision will we make today? Let us choose one that honors God, impacts our loved ones, and fulfill the vision He has for our lives. Let us also decide to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, and strength—both today and in the days to come.

**In preparing this sermon, I have been inspired by various sermons, including Rick Warren’s God’s Dream series, based on texts from Joshua 24:14-29; Mark 9:14-29; Romans 8:31-39.*