

MARK 13:24-37 | ISAIAH 64:1-9 | PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

Those who dream do not fall asleep to the realities of the world. God prompts us to pay attention to where God’s dreams for change and new life are emerging. In Advent, we remember that God’s ultimate dream is to be intimately connected to us—to come down and dwell among us. As we keep awake, we join Isaiah and the psalmist in pleading for restoration and for God to draw near.

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Audrey Hepburn* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara, illustrated by Amaia Arrazola

<https://bit.ly/eumcadvent01> Audrey Hepburn

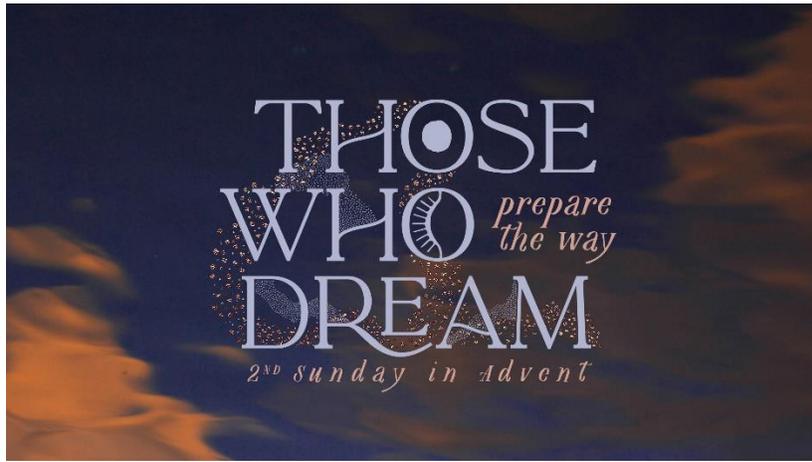
Dance as though no one is watching you, love as though you have never been hurt before, sing as though no one can hear you, live as though heaven is on earth." Audrey Hepburn

Ask: What do you think it looks like when we “live as though heaven is on earth” as Audrey said? Audrey didn’t ignore people who needed help—who have you noticed needing extra help? What can we do about it? Where do you see hope in the world?

Listen: “The fig tree teaches us a lesson: When its branches become green and soft, and new leaves begin to grow, then you know that summer is near. So also when you see all these things happening, then you will know that the time is near, ready to come.” –Mark 13:28-29, ICB

Say: Jesus told the disciples to pay attention to signs that heaven on earth was coming soon. When we look around and pay attention, we notice things. We might notice other people who need help. We might notice signs of hope that things will get better. Pay attention this week to where the world needs some hope, and where there is already hope.

Pray: Dear God, please help me pay attention to the needs of others. Help me to live as though heaven is on earth and bring hope to everyone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



MARK 1:1-8 | ISAIAH 40:1-11 | PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

John the Baptist calls the crowds into the journey of repentance and transformation. Similarly, we are called to prepare the way for God’s message of love and liberation to be shouted, heard, and received. Those who dream make way for righteousness and peace to kiss, for faithfulness to spring up from the ground (Ps. 85:10-11).

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Rosa Parks* by Lisbeth Kaiser, illustrated by Marta Antelo

<https://bit.ly/eumcadvent2>

“Each person must live their life as a model for others.” Rosa Parks

Defiance- Open resistance or refusal to obey. In Rosa’s case, she refused to accept that people of different color could be treated differently.

Ask: How did Rosa help prepare the way for others? How do you think she learned to be so brave? What is it like to be the first one to do something?

Listen: “Prepare in the desert
the way for the Lord.

Make the road in the dry lands
straight for our God.

Every valley should be raised up.

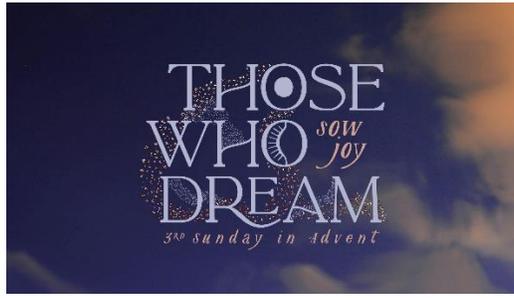
Every mountain and hill should be made flat.

The rough ground should be made level.

The rugged ground should be made smooth.” –Isaiah 40:3b-4, ICB

Say: John the Baptist used these words from the prophet Isaiah to announce that Jesus was coming. His job was to prepare the way so that people would be ready to follow Jesus. We can also do that! What are some ways that you can help prepare the way for peace in the world?

Pray: Dear God, even when it’s scary, I want to be a peacemaker. Help me to prepare the way for other people to follow you to a kinder, more equal world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



LUKE 1:46-55 | ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11 | PS. 126

Ultimately, dreams sow joy, even if that joy doesn't immediately spring forth. Sowing seeds into the soil always feels risky and feeble—how can something so small become something so beautiful, so big, and so nourishing? Like Mary, we are called to tend and nurture the dreams God has woven into us.

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Frida Kahlo* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara, illustrated by Gee Fan Eng

<https://bit.ly/eumcadvent3>

"Nothing is worth more than laughter. It is strength to laugh and to abandon oneself, to be light." – Frida Kahlo

Ask: What brought Frida joy? Do you think she was always happy? Why do you think she painted—was it for other people or herself? What brings you joy? How can you look for joy and spread joy even when things are scary or sad?

Listen: "The Lord makes me very happy.

All that I am rejoices in my God.

The Lord has covered me with clothes of salvation.

God has covered me with a coat of goodness.

I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding.

I am like a bride dressed in jewels.

The earth causes plants to grow.

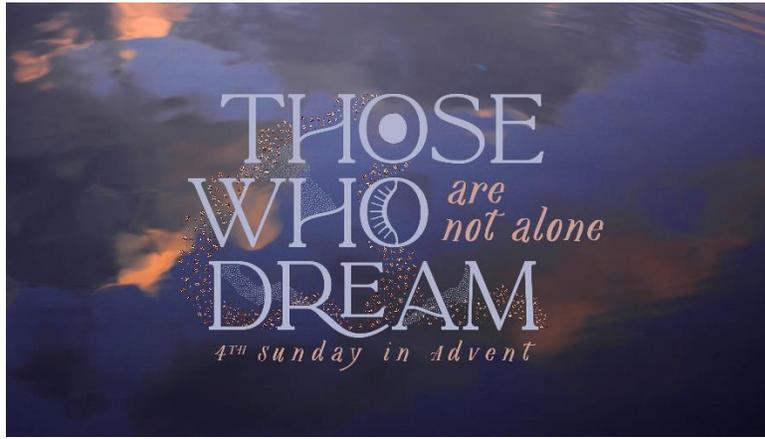
And a garden causes the seeds planted there to grow.

In the same way the Lord God will make grow what is right.

God will make praise come from all the nations." - Isaiah 61:10-11, ICB

Say: The prophet Isaiah talks about gardening, and that God will make good things grow. Have you ever planted seeds? It takes a long time for the plant to grow, doesn't it? Sometimes we have to plant things when it's winter and nothing is growing and it's dark outside, knowing that the flowers will bloom in the spring. And joy is like that, too. Even when things don't feel very happy, we can decide to plant joy in our hearts.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for all the wonderful things in the world that bring me joy. (*You might have the child(ren) name some of those things here.*) Even when it seems like everything is too big and scary and heavy to be joyful, help me see and share joy every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.



LUKE 1:26-45 | 2 SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16 | PSALM 89:1-4, 19-26

This week, we recognize what preceded Mary's song of praise: news that was disorienting and bewildering, possibly threatening her life. Together, Mary and Elizabeth find courage and comfort in spite of their unusual circumstances. We, too, are called to carry, support, and encourage one another's dreams.

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Corazon Aquino* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara, illustrated by Ginie Hsu

<https://bit.ly/eumcadvent4>

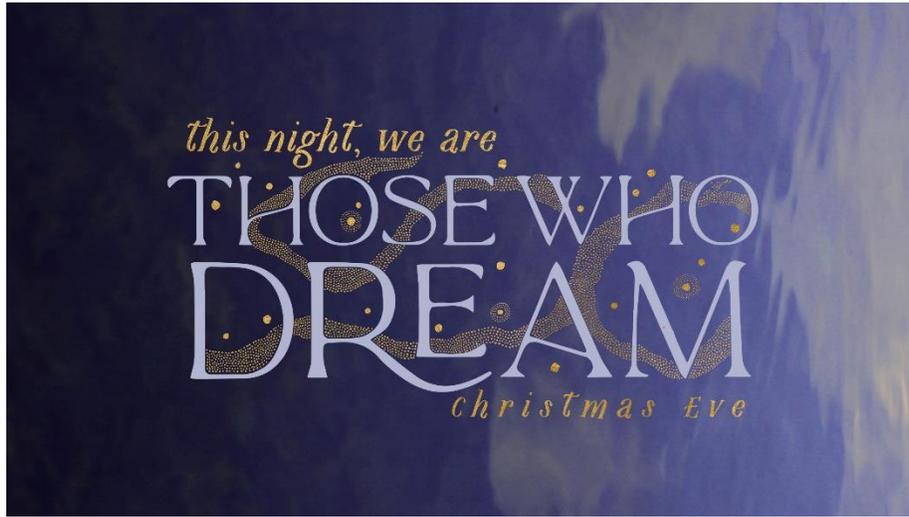
"Faith is not simply a patience that passively suffers until the storm is past. Rather, it is a spirit that bears things - with resignations, yes, but above all, with blazing, serene hope."
Corazon Aquino

Ask: Cory and Ninoy worked together to be good leaders for their people, but when Ninoy died, Cory still wasn't alone—her whole country supported her. Who do you know you can rely on when things are hard? Who can you ask for help? How can you help other people, especially people who feel alone and scared?

Listen: "Mary got up and went quickly to a town in the mountains of Judea. She went to Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the unborn baby inside Elizabeth jumped. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." –Luke 1:39-41, ICB

Say: As soon as Mary heard she was going to have a baby, she went to go see her cousin. And do you know what? Her cousin was going to have a baby, too! I think Mary wanted to be around someone who knew what she was going through. That's always nice, isn't it, when someone knows what you're feeling? I hope that you know some people you can go to when you're having big feelings so that they can help you like Elizabeth helped Mary.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for sending other people to help us when we are in trouble. Help me to be a good friend who helps others so that no one is ever alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.



LUKE 2:1-20 | ISAIAH 9:2-7

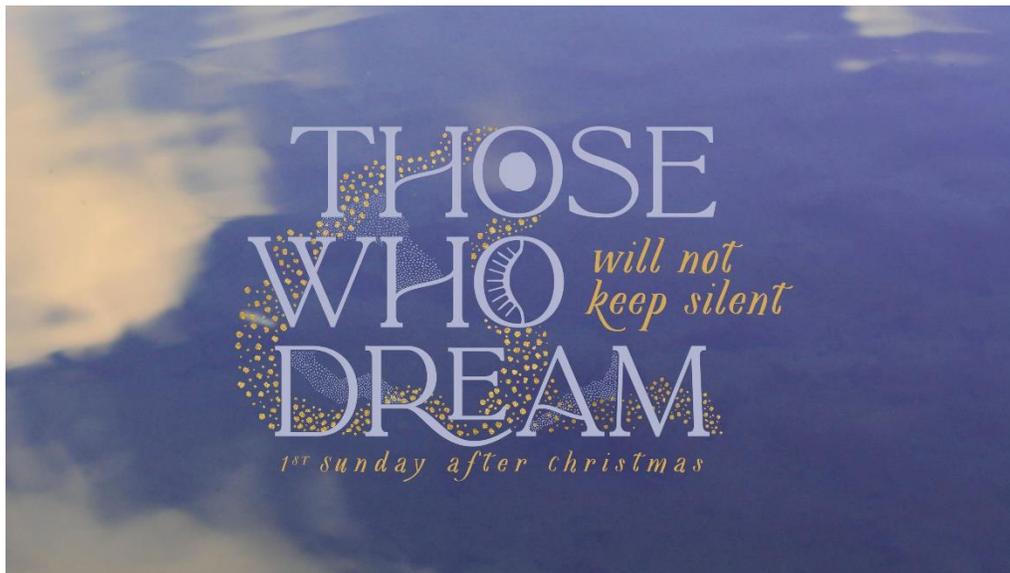
The Christmas story reminds us that we are all dreamers. Like those gathered around the manger, we come to this night each year with awe, wonder, and holy imagination for what is possible. Like Mary, we treasure God’s dream in our hearts and commit to keeping it alive. Like the holy family, we believe and trust in a God who comes to us in the vulnerability of a child.

Read: On Christmas Eve, we remember the nativity story. If you would like to share this story through a picture book, here are some recommendations:

- *The Nativity*, Biblical text, illustrated by Julie Vivas
- *A Child is Born* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Floyd Cooper
- *Silent Night (The Christmas Choir)*, text from “Silent Night”, illustrated by Lara Hawthorne
- *A Child Is Born* by Mary Alice Gran, illustrated by Christa Hook
- *Goodnight, Manger* by Laura Sassi, illustrated by Jane Chapman
- *Nativity*, Biblical text, illustrated by Cythnia Rylant
(*includes the Beatitudes at the end*)
- *The Christmas Book* by Donna Kelly, illustrated by Jim Robison
(*Hint: Do you have a beloved classic like this one where the text is good, but the people are just too light skinned? Get out your colored pencils and give them a little makeover! While you do this, you might talk to your child about how God With Us means Jesus came to be with all of humanity, with every culture and race.*)

Ask: Imagine you are in this story. Which character would you be? Do you think the shepherds thought they were dreaming when they saw the angels? What kind of dreams do you think Mary and Joseph had for their newborn baby? What dreams does God have for the world?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Help me to be like Mary and Joseph, the angels and the magi, to be a dreamer. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



LUKE 2:22-40 | ISAIAH 61:10-62:3

God's dreams are not for us alone. Simeon and Anna could not keep silent—they witnessed Jesus' divine presence in the temple and were compelled to speak up. Like the prophet Isaiah, we will not keep silent and we will not rest until what has been sown will spring up as righteousness and peace in every nation (Is. 61:11-62:2).

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Maya Angelou* by Lisbeth Kaiser, illustrated by Leire Salaberria

<https://bit.ly/eumcxmas1>

Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it. Maya Angelou

Ask: What helped Maya find her voice again after she stopped speaking for so long? Why was it important for Maya to speak up? How else did Maya speak up without talking? What are some things that are important to you that you feel like you have to speak up about?

Listen: “Anna, a prophetess, was there at the Temple. She was now 84 years old. Anna never left the Temple. She worshiped God by going without food and praying day and night. She was standing there at that time, thanking God. She talked about Jesus to all who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.” –Luke 2:36a, 37b-38, ICB

Say: Anna and Simeon had been waiting for Jesus for a long, long time. God had promised that the Messiah would be coming, even before Jesus was born. And so they waited and waited. When Jesus was born and they finally got to meet him, they were so excited! Anna told everybody that the waiting was over! When something is really important, that's no time to keep quiet—we have to share the good news with everyone.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for giving me a voice and for the many ways I can use it. Please help me to be brave and to speak up for what's important. In Jesus' name, Amen.



MATTHEW 2:1-12 | ISAIAH 60:1-6

On Epiphany, we celebrate how God's love transverses cultural and geographical barriers to become good news for all people. We marvel at the persistence of God to shine the way for the Magi so that they might bear witness to the divine. We honor that the Magi trusted their dreams and returned home by another way. As we journey forward, we carry the dreams of our ancestors in faith. With courage and resilience, we dream on.

Read: *Little People, Big Dreams: Greta Thunberg* by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara, illustrated by Anke Weckmann

<https://bit.ly/eumcephany>

"I have learned you are never too small to make a difference."

Greta Thunberg

Ask: What started with one girl spread around the whole world because it was so important to her, and she never gave up. In fact, she's still holding her sign every Friday! Do you think she wanted to give up sometimes? Why do you think she's kept going?

Listen: "Jerusalem, get up and shine. Your light has come.

The glory of the Lord shines on you.

Darkness now covers the earth.

Deep darkness covers her people.

But the Lord shines on you,

and people see his glory around you." –Isaiah 60:1-2, ICB

Say: God sent a star to guide the magi to meet Jesus. They were from a different country. It was probably a long, difficult journey to get there. They didn't have airplanes or trains or buses. But they kept going, even though it was hard. And God keeps shining, day and night, to guide us and to show us the way, because the good news is just that important. What helps you keep going when you're doing something important?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for always being with me when things are hard. Help me to keep going, even when I want to give up. In Jesus' name, Amen.