

“The world we dream about”

Rev. Maeve Hammond

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Prayer

Synopsis: *“To the world we dream about and the one we live in now...”* This week in worship, we'll read Genesis 28:10-19a and Romans 8:12-25 through the theme of hopeful dreaming. Guided by Jacob's dream in Bethel, prophetic experiences in Scripture, Christian mystics, and the Broadway musical *Hadestown*, Rev. Maeve will lead us in this question: How by hopeful dreaming do we get closer to God's Kingdom?

1. Genesis 28:10-19

- a. Jacob comes to a “certain place” to rest for the night
- b. He puts a **stone** under his head
 - i. What? A stone as a pillow?
- c. Stairway to heaven with God and angels descending on it
- d. God makes Godself known
- e. God promises the land to Jacob and his descendents
- f. God also makes this promise: “Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and **will bring you back to this land**, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised.” (Gen. 28:15)
- g. After Jacob awakes, he **anoints the stone** he had kept under his head with oil
 - i. Connection between Creation and Jacob
 - ii. Jacob sees Creation as a messenger, as a cord between him and God
- h. Calls this “certain place” *Bethel*
 - i. Bet = house
 - ii. El = god, god-like, mighty one
 - iii. Beth + El = House of God

1. Romans 8:12-25

- a. “For all who are led by the Spirit are children of God...and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14-15)
 - i. Spirit came to Jacob, the spirit that moved in Jesus' time, and the spirit that guides us today, but to what?
- b. “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God...That the creation will be set free from its...decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21)
 - i. The healing of creation—the hope of a future with plenitude and of peace
- c. “Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with patience” (Romans 8:24-25)
 - i. Dreamlike promise, almost as we *too* are like Jacob receiving a dreamlike message

1. Examples of prophetic dreams and/or revelations in Scripture and in the history of Christianity
 - a. 21 dreams recorded in the Bible
 - i. 10 in Genesis, 1 in Judges, 1 in First Kings, 3 in Daniel, and 6 in Gospel of Matthew
 - ii. Some are warnings
 - iii. Some, like Jacob's Ladder (Gen 28:12), are promises
 - b. Numbers calls revelations and visions "waking dreams" (Num 24:4)
 - c. St. Julian of Norwich, St. Hildegard von Bingen, and St. Teresa of Avila
 - i. Reported having revelations or "waking dreams"
 - ii. Encounters with God
 - iii. Mental and somatic experiences
 1. Being held by Christ; seeing a bright light
 - iv. Receive a message or a feeling that indicate God's love and compassion

1. Hadestown

- a. Origins and journey synopsis
 - i. Original touring performance in 2006
 - ii. 2010 concept album by Anais Mitchell
 - iii. Premiered on Broadway in 2019
- b. Description from the musical's website
 - i. "Welcome to HADESTOWN, where a song can change your fate. This acclaimed musical by singer-songwriter Anais Mitchell and director Rachel Chavkin is winner of 8 Tony Awards including Best Musical and the Grammy Award® for Best Musical Theater Album. It intertwines two mythic tales — that of young dreamers Orpheus and Eurydice, and that of King Hades and Queen Persephone — as it invites you on an unforgettable journey to the underworld and back."
- c. My synopsis
 - i. Eurydice and Orpheus are a young couple in love. Eurydice is logical and aware of the harsh realities of life. Orpheus is a poet, writer, and dreamer who ignores harshness and embraces the small beauties. Eurydice, cold, hungry, and in poverty, decides to leave her life with Orpheus and travel to Hadestown, the underworld ruled by the god Hades. Hadestown, however, is not the world Eurydice was promised: the work is hard in a "graveyard" of exploited laborers who eventually forget who they are and who they were before they became Hades' subjects. The environment itself is nearly unlivable: it's polluted from machines and gas and industry. Orpheus travels to the underworld to rescue Eurydice and return her to earth, but, as the myth goes, he fails. He has one task: as he leads Eurydice out of Hadestown, he *CANNOT* turn around to look at her. It's like Lot's Wife turning into a pillar of salt. Orpheus does fail: he turns around to look at her, overcome by his doubt and anxiety that she is no

longer following him. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. But, as the musical says, "it's about someone who *tries*."

1. What does Hadestown have to do with these passages from Scripture?
 - a. "To the world we dream about and the one we live in now"
 - i. Orpheus says this line at the beginning of the musical. His whole character at this point *embodies* hopeful dreaming.
 - ii. The world God promises Jacob is *not* the world he's currently living in
 - iii. Rather, speaks in the future tense: "I *will* give [the land] to you and your offspring" ... I "will bring you back to this land"
 - iv. God blesses both the world we live in *and* the world of radical hope, of a healed earth, of peace and reconciliation
 - v. God blesses us as we work towards a world of equity and justice where everyone has enough and God will always fill our cup
 - b. "It's a love song. It's a tale of a love from long ago. It's a sad song. We keep singing even so. It's an old song. It's an old tale from way back when. And we're gonna sing it again and again. Cause here's the thing. To know how it ends. And still begin to sing it again. As if it might turn out this time."
 - i. Hope in retelling. During the show, right before Orpheus turns around, the whole audience believes that maybe, just for this performance, Orpheus will fulfill his task and save Eurydice. He won't turn around.
 1. We wait with bated breath, like St. Paul says in Romans 8: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."
 - ii. Maybe it'll change? Maybe it'll remind us of how things can be different? Maybe it'll ground us? Maybe we'll see things differently after hearing it time and time again/being faced with the same issue time and time again?
 - c. The power of repetition + sacred or familiar texts → Jesus' death and resurrection
 - d. The hope of a story ending in wholeness, not in tragedy

1. So, what?
 - a. God's message is one of radical hope
 - b. Making the dream of God's Kingdom come ever closer to reality
 - c. How can we dream for ourselves and others? How can we allow the spirit to move us to hopeful dreaming? How can we upend this world of injustice, pain, and pollution and rewrite our world to a story of wholeness, not tragedy?
 - d. Let's dream this new world into existence together. Amen.