

Sometimes I dream of wandering off onto an adventure, it may sound backwards, and probably isn't the best thing to say at the beginning of a sermon after our pastoral transition, but it's true.

Sometimes I daydream of going on an adventure. It's a little like that feeling I felt when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Mrs. Johnsons class, when I used to peer out that south facing window looking out into the field behind the school wondering when our next field trip might be. My most common wandering daydream comes in the form of church conferences. Yea, I know, church nerd here. Work at a church, teach in a church, and daydream about church. (raise hand). You got me.

When I was 22 I used to worry about that, I used to sit in my small cinderblock office in the first church I ever served and worry if people thought me strange for falling in love with the beloved community of Christ while working for the church that doesn't always look like that.

But that's why I actually fell in love in the first place. I loved that first church I served, for the way that 120 old folks in worship put up tens of thousands of dollars to reach out to youth in their town who didn't have a home and said come on in and don't worry about making a mess.

I loved my second church that I ever served because it didn't come with any pretense, despite being part of the stuffy Presbyterian denomination, it was full of 20's and 30 somethings that just wanted to walk together discovering what a life of faith looked like for them in their neighborhood in San Francisco. Seriously, I don't think I ever saw, and I certainly never wore a tie to that church.

It really is the little things that cause me to fall in love. I love the way that acolytes come striding down the aisle to light our candles at Broadway and sometimes they rush just a little too much that the flame goes out. Yet you know what, those candles get lit again and again every Sunday. Sometimes I even have to run out ahead of them at the 11:15 service because we forgot to snuff out the candles after 9:00 am. Those are moments of joy, of happiness for me.

A friend of mine once wrote me, saying the older he gets the more he realizes that those people who try hard to be happy seldom are. I think that's it is because as we grow older the definition of happiness changes. I sat with a bunch of incoming freshmen at our Disciples on Campus gathering Wednesday learning about the things they loved, and I dreamed of what it would be like to be like them again and have nothing but time to do whatever I was most interested in doing on a given Friday night. It used to take something new and shiny like a new laptop, cellphone, video game, some shiny new tech thing to make me happy, now if I get home and my phone still has a little bit of charge, I'm content. Or if I get an hour to sit on our back deck with Julia after a long day where we have the energy to have a genuine conversation.

**When it takes less and less to be content, we're on our way to joy.**

But there I go wandering off again. I was telling you about how I daydream about church conferences. I think it is because they look all bright and shiny on the outside. They always have websites that read so well that you always feel like you are bound to find some fantastic idea there to bring back and make you look like a genius. Too often that's what I think I need from church conferences. The newest and latest ways to get rad sermon illustrations, the latest and greatest youth game that's destined to grow your youth group, or the number one hot trend guaranteed to increase giving, that sorta thing.

Yet, this week I saw that a church conference I daydreamed about a while back in Asheville in October, that sold out. It is created by Rachel Held Evans and Sarah Bessey and they've called it Evolving Faith. It's a gathering of kindred spirits, an opportunity to learn, wrestle, worship, laugh and commiserate as we navigate this journey through faith together. You got to admit that's a really great tag line, and knowing those two women, who are wicked smart, it is going to be as fantastic as it sounds.

I thought of this conference again this week because of the quote that came across my social media feed from Sarah Bessey who wrote, "Set out, pilgrim. Set out into the freedom and the wandering. Find your people. God is much bigger, wilder, more generous, and more wonderful than you imagine."

This to me is what the Psalmist in Psalm 84 is proclaiming about God's dwelling place. Happy are those whose strength is in You. Blessed are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

Happiness is too often based on things that are fleeting – cars rust, the cat coughs up a hair ball on the new couch, laptops that get snatched out of cars on Sabbatical.

We are better off aiming for peace at the center.

You see the things that used to cause me to worry no longer do. For a long time, I wanted everyone to like me and used to fret if they didn't. Now I'm worried less about the good opinions of strangers. On the flip-side, there are other people whose opinion of me has become all important. Perhaps the most significant change that comes along with sprouting a few gray hairs is whose opinion matters to you and whose opinion doesn't. If you've thought about this yourself, you'll know what I mean.

When I was younger, I wanted to make a huge difference in the lives of lots of people, I was impressed by people who preached from big pulpits in big churches in big cities. It's a little like that old wives' tale about wealth, where the assumption is that those with money got what they were looking for... Just ask my family about my expensive taste in things, and you'll learn real quick that I haven't always grown past that one. Yet these days, that's not what I'm mostly looking for, what I am looking for is a place to dwell, to rest alongside Jesus, to chuckle with him at the little things in life, to appreciate what I have and savor where I am. Some days I manage to do just that, some days I don't.

In the midst of all the changes around here at Broadway it has compelled me, as it has for some of you to have a little retrospection, and I think this is a good moment to share with all of you some of what has come to the surface for me. It gives me a little hope to think that sharing this with you all aloud will help me to learn what has worked and needs retaining and what hasn't worked and needs releasing.

When I was in high school my first real job was as a page at the public library and ever Friday night we would make a mad push to get every returned book that

week back into circulation before the rush on Saturday. I know rushes at a library. It was a way for the library to discover what we had and what we lacked. So too, in Christian life, should we take regular inventory of our dwelling place, and all we are and all Christ summons us to be.

This I'm learning in my middle years, with the trust you all as a congregation has shown me these past few weeks, among all of my many friends. It's when you daydream about other places, you often miss seeing the thing right in front of you.

Mrs. Johnson taught me that all the way back in that 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, cause after I used to daydream out that window, she took us all into that field out behind the school and taught us to launch rockets, and to see that learning could be more fun than dreaming about being somewhere else.

And while these past few weeks have been really tough ones, what has been affirmed for me is that Broadway is a good church, full of good people, trying to find a way through together. I'm not just talking about the past few weeks, but really the past few years. It's good to be on a journey with folks who aren't afraid to hold each other accountable, who are trying to look forward to what we can be, and are always finding new ways to serve and to celebrate together.

You are here, in this place, one of God's dwelling places, whether you are wandering in for your first Sunday, you've been here for almost 60 years or you're wandering back in after being out on a field trip, know and trust that God has brought you here to this community of faith.

**It's like when I used to read books instead of shelving them on those Friday nights, and I used to fold the corner of my favorite page in certain ones, so that the next reader would know where to look for the good parts.**

For a day in God's court, even with the imperfect beloved community of Christ, is a fore-taste of that great day when where we will all walk together, along the fresh spring of water, where the early rain covers the pools, where we can go from strength to strength, each one appearing before God, and we can let our hearts sing for joy.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O great teacher, ever singing your praise.