

Have you ever had a dream that you just can't shake? It may be a happy dream – I remember one I had when I was young, and in part of that dream I was able to jump up and fly just like Superman – arms out in front, cape blowing in the wind behind, high above the earth – I felt warm, and free, and protected, and safe – it was a wonderful dream that occasionally I remember to this day.

I have had other dreams which have been scary, and which sometimes wake me up with a start – often these would be of me falling, and I would wake up with my heart pounding, just before I was about to hit the ground.

I had a dream the other night – one I found quite troubling, and which I haven't been able to shake.

My Dad was talking to me. He looked very sad and depressed. He said “David, you need to tell everyone that God is real. I walked away from Him and decided He didn't exist – and now I'm paying the price. He's confronted me with His full reality, and I can't hide from Him. He's punishing me with His separation, and it's terrible.”

Then, my Mum was talking to me. She had a huge smile, and was as happy as I've ever seen her. She said “I am so glad that I knew Jesus when I was on earth. He is so wonderful! He has welcomed me home with open arms and a glad heart – and I have never been happier. David, please tell everyone about Jesus, what He did for them, and how much He loves them.”

... and then I woke up.

You need to know the background of my dream for it to make sense. My Dad was an Anglican Priest – he was well-loved by his parish, the community he served in, and his family. In many ways, I had an idyllic childhood. However, when I was 12, my Dad, for whatever reason, decided he no longer believed in God, and didn't love my mother, either. So, he left the church and he left his family – my family – and moved away, from Camrose to Edmonton.

Though we kept in touch until he died in December of 2015, Dad never did regain his belief in God, and always maintained that we as humans were selfish creatures, destined to be true to our selfish nature – and that life was only comprised of what you could see and sense around you.

My Mum, though devastated by Dad leaving (for she too, was living her dream life at the time), never left the church, never left the family, and never abandoned her faith. At her funeral on June 3 (just a couple of weeks ago now), the Priest commented at length about how the light of God shone continually through my Mum, how she was a huge, positive influence to those around her, and how valued she was in her parish – even though she wouldn't have thought so herself, for Mum was an extremely humble woman in many ways.

I have been very happy for Mum since she died, for I know she is in heaven, with God, with Jesus. And I have been praying (and continue to pray) for Dad – for I pray that though he rejected Jesus, now that he is confronted with the full reality of God, that Dad will turn and accept God's love over his own pride, and enter God's kingdom. I pray that when I eventually get there, I will see the two of them sitting with Jesus, filled with joy. I pray that I will see each of you there, too.

We don't always get things right – it's easy to become confused and misguided, and all of us, including me, are susceptible to that.

There's a story of a teacher who was helping one of her kindergarten students put his boots on. He asked for help, and she could see why. With her pulling and him pushing, the boots still didn't want to go on. When the second boot was finally on, she had worked up a sweat. She almost whimpered when the little boy said, "Teacher, they're on the wrong feet." She looked, and sure enough, they were.

It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as together they worked to get the boots back on — this time on the right feet. He then announced, "These aren't my boots." She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?" like she wanted to.

Once again she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off. He then said, "They're my brother's boots. My mom made me wear them." She didn't know if she should laugh or cry. She mustered up the grace to wrestle the boots on his feet again. Once done, she said, "Now, where are your mittens?" He said, "I stuffed them in the toes of my boots."

Sometimes, when we don't understand things just right, we make mistakes – just like that little boy and the teacher, my Dad made a mistake – but Dad's mistake was much, much more serious than that of the little boy.

1<sup>st</sup> of all, God is real. And, as we are told in Genesis, God created a wonderful world for us. There are many sermons that could be (and have been) preached on the 1<sup>st</sup> reading we had today, but suffice to say that in creation, God was creating a wonderful temple – the most wondrous temple imaginable. And in that temple, as any sane temple builder would do, God put His Image – which happens to be us. And then, He even went so far as to make everything in that temple be able to support and care for His Image.

So, you may not feel or believe sometime that God is real – but I have been told to tell you: God IS real. Believe this, for as my Dad and Mum know, your eternal life depends on it.

And you may at times not believe or feel you are really God's Image – you are not worthy enough, or not 'holy' enough, or not 'godly enough' – but that is all hogwash. God is real, and you are God's image. There is no one finer that He would pick. You are the "A-Team", so to speak – remember them? The bumbling silly people in that early 80's series, who would somehow shoot themselves out of every encounter, bombs exploding all over the place (though no ever seemed to actually get hurt), and save the day even though none of them really had an idea of what was going on? Sound familiar? We are the "A-Team!"

So, 1<sup>st</sup> of all: God IS. Everything else may come and go, but God IS.

2<sup>nd</sup> of all: You are God's Image.

And 3<sup>rd</sup> of all: God has risen you up to His level. As our psalm today says: "what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour."

God has sanctified us, brought us up to His level, even though we are so sinful, He has given us entry into Him and made us holy. How?

Through Jesus. He did this through Jesus coming to us, and showing us what God is like. He did this

through Jesus coming, and dying on the cross to pay for our sins – each and every sin, in each and every person. You cannot out-sin God! No matter what you have done, if you come back to Him earnestly and truthfully, He will forgive you. But neither can you mock God – you must be truthful and earnest. You must turn your life around. This is not “6 easy steps to heaven” conversion. This is, rather, “turn your life upside-down and give up everything for the love of God” conversion. In Jesus' death and resurrection, we are healed. But only healed if we openly and honestly confront all our sins – confront them all and replace them. Only healed when God becomes bigger inside us than our own pride, our evil, our selfishness, our lack of faith and trust – how much bigger? About a mustard-seed.

In Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Anointed, God Himself became one of us, and when we attach ourselves to Him, we can be healed. We live then, under His authority. Authority to do what?

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

This means that we are given, first of all, the authority to love. Jesus said “love one another as I have loved you, for that is how people will know that you are my disciple.” Love – oh, if only you were known as the person who loves! Only if you were known as the 'People who love!' There is not much greater honour than that, for an Image of God. Second, to immerse people not in your love, for our love is weak and fickle – but in the love of God: the love of the Father, the love of the Son, the love of the Holy Spirit. And with that Holy Spirit, third, to tell and show people what it means to walk with God, and live in His Kingdom. For through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is with you, now and forever – to the end of the age.

To recount: So, 1<sup>st</sup> of all: God IS. 2<sup>nd</sup> of all: You are God's Image. 3<sup>rd</sup> of all: God has risen you up to His level. 4<sup>th</sup> of all: Through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, you are forgiven all your sins and healed. 5<sup>th</sup> of all: In Christ, you have the Authority to share God's love with all you meet. You have the authority to show that love. You have the authority to tell people – and please tell them, because I DON'T want you, or anyone, to have the fate that my Dad has fallen into (his way forward will, I pray, eventually lead to God, but it is most painful, and most unnecessary. Please don't take that path)! Live Godly lives, rejoice and help each other, and witness God redeeming His images, one person at a time. Pray for each other. Pray for those you love. Love everyone! Read your Bible. Talk to God about it. Seek each others' benefit. Share God with others, in love, in wonder, in joy, in gentleness, in peace. Be who you were created to be: children of the Most High. Know yourself.

And finally – well, I cannot end better than as St. Paul wrote: Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.