

St. Andrew's Sermons  
The Rev. John D. Rohrs  
19 Pent A; Oct. 23, 2011  
Text: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

## **The Promised Land**

It must have been so bittersweet. Moses, the great prophet, stood at the top of the mountain looking down on the promised land. He'd led his people for so many years, endured so many hardships. Through it all he had remained faithful to the dream that he saw before him. The land of hope and promise was right there, stretched out as far as he could see, and yet at that moment God whispered in the old man's ear.

"I will give to your descendants all of this land, everything you see with your eyes," God said. "But as for you, you shall not cross over."

Imagine the emotions of that moment. It's easy to do, because all of us at some time in our lives have been stopped short of a promised land. We all have seen dreams go unfulfilled. Sometimes, they are youthful dreams of fancy, and there's no great loss. Not many people get to be ballerinas or baseball stars. But the dreams of adulthood are another matter. Those are the realistic dreams we build our lives around, and they are heartbreaking to have shattered. The dream of a career that ends in failure. The dream of being a parent, only to find you can't conceive. The dream of growing old with your spouse, until the marriage unravels. The dream of watching your children grow up, when suddenly illness strikes.

These are devastating moments, and we all experience something like this over the course of our lives. Like Moses, at one time or another we are left on the mountaintop, looking out on a beautiful vision, an image that for us will never become reality.

When you come to one of those moments, perhaps you can find some comfort in the story of Moses. In those final moments with God, he discovered that in fact the journey was the destination. He realized that the great blessing of his life was not in reaching the promised land but in the relationship he formed with God along the way. And he knew that whatever was left undone, whatever dreams were unfulfilled, he could trust God to see them through.

T. S. Eliot wrote: “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” That place, the starting and ending place, is for each of us the loving arms of God. That’s where Moses began – rescued from the bulrushes – and that’s where he ended, consoled by his God and friend.

It’s the same for each of us. Life is full of dashed hopes and shattered dreams, but the great consolation of faith is that those are oftentimes the moments when God is most present. Those are the moments in which God embraces us and slowly picks up the pieces of our dreams, reforming them into an eternal gift of grace and love. In the end it is that gift that matters most, and it is greater still than all our dreams come true. Amen.