

Christmas 2A Hickory Neck Episcopal Church 5 Jan 2013

The Rev. Henry P. McQueen

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Ps 84:1-8; Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a; Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

S.D.G.

It was only a few weeks ago that I preached about Joseph, and here he is again in one of his few appearances in Scripture, a man of action. Joseph heard in a dream of Herod wanting to kill the Christ Child, he responds to the angel of the Lord and takes his wife and son to safety in Egypt.

Traveling from Bethlehem to Egypt was not an easy trip. It is a distance of about 200 miles. Imagine waking up from a dream and saying “honey, we are going to Wilmington Delaware. And we are leaving right now, no time to tell our family, we will take a donkey if we can find one otherwise we will walk.” That would certainly not be a popular idea in most households. Mary, Joseph and Jesus did the trip twice. All because the angel of the Lord spoke to them in a dream.

Three years after arriving in Egypt, the angel of the Lord again spoke to Joseph in a dream. They were to return to the land of Israel. And then yet another dream, this time they were to go to Nazareth.

Go to Egypt. Go to Judea. Go to Nazareth. The angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream.

How often do we wake up from a dream fascinated by what we just saw in our own mind – only to have the memory of the dream disappear when morning arrives? Yet Joseph captured the dream and acted upon it.

Others around us have had a dream, captured it and acted upon it. Many of those people readily acknowledge that the dream was inspired by the angel of the Lord. Others are not able to recognize who inspired their dream, they don't recognize the true source of their inspiration.

In 1828, not quite 200 years ago, Bishop John Henry Hobart consulted with the mayor of New York city about the feasibility of constructing an Episcopal Cathedral in the city.

The corner stone for the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine was laid 64 years later in 1892, the year Ellis Island opened. Envisioned as a 'house of prayer for all people' and as a tribute to the intersection of political ideals and the Gospel, the initial worship spaces that were created were the seven Chapels of the Tongues; built in recognition of the early immigrant groups that flowed into our country. Perhaps the construction of a Cathedral is never really complete, however after delays caused by two world wars and renovations necessitated by a significant fire, in 2008, 180 years after the first conversations, the entire length of the world's largest gothic cathedral was reopened and rededicated.

Wynton Marsalis commented "As I look around at this cathedral and am reminded of other cathedrals around the world, I think that those who start such a project do so knowing that they will not live to see it finished. We need more of those people."

Consider the dream of another American whose birth we will celebrate in a few weeks. His words come to us saying "And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream..... I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." "I have a dream today" Martin Luther King spoke those words just over 50 years ago.

His dream rings true today as it did then. Many of the struggles are different, many remain. But his closing words speak to us today as they did 50 years ago:

"And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Martin Luther King had a dream. That dream is the dream of the Bible. "When all of God's children will be able to join hands and sing his praise."

In the Gospel lesson today we hear of Mary, and Joseph taking Jesus to safety in Egypt. At the time, Egypt was a land of refugees. It was a melting pot of every conceivable nation and tribe. Representatives of all of God's children could be found there. When Mary, Joseph and Jesus return to the land of Israel they went to Nazareth. Mary and Joseph, devout Jews, made their home in a gentile community.

From the beginning, Jesus was surrounded by all of God's children. This is our assurance that our dream of salvation is one that is shared with all of God's children.

But what about our dreams? Do our dreams reflect the dreams of our Lord? Are we comfortable nurturing a dream that may not be fulfilled within our own lifetime?

Those who envisioned the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine imagined a house of prayer for all people. Martin Luther King's dream is one of equality and unity. All of God's people called to live together. These dreams were nurtured by God who is our hope for salvation and resurrection. God sustained the dreams, he is a God of hope.

God's word was spread through the dreams of these children of God. They heard God's word and it became their dream.

Joseph captured his dream and did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He was able to hear and recognize the word of the Lord. Christ was protected from the cruelty of Herod and his ministry survived the first of many trials.

We may never know if our dreams will have the same impact as those of Joseph, Bishop Hobart or Dr. King. But each dream, each time the Lord speaks to us it is a blessing. Listen, be still so that you can hear. And sing praise to the Lord saying "I have a dream today" Alleluia.

Amen,