

Psalm 126

When the Divine Lover enters the human heart,
all our dreams (yearnings) are fulfilled!
Then will our mouths ring forth with laughter,
and our tongues with shouts of joy;
Then will we sing our songs of praise
to You, O Beloved of all hearts.
For gladness will radiate out for all to see;
so great is your Presence among us.

Restore us to wholeness, O Healer,
like newborn babes who have never strayed from You!
May all who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy!
May all who go forth weeping tears
of repentance, bearing seeds of Love,
Come home to You with shouts of joy,
leaving sorrow behind.

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one." — John Lennon

"Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird,
That cannot fly."
— Langston Hughes

"Dreams"
by Mary Oliver

All night
the dark buds of dreams
open
richly.
In the center
of every petal
is a letter,
and you imagine
if you could only remember
and string them all together
they would spell the answer.
It is a long night,
and not an easy one —
you have so many branches,
and there are diversions —
birds that come and go,

the black fox that lies down
to sleep beneath you,
the moon staring
with her bone-white eye.
Finally you have spent
all the energy you can
and you drag from the ground
the muddy skirt of your roots
and leap awake
with two or three syllables
like water in your mouth
and a sense
of loss — a memory
not yet of a word,
certainly not yet the answer —
only how it feels
when deep in the tree
all the locks click open,
and the fire surges through the wood,
and the blossoms blossom.

Rev. Scott Marrese-Wheeler
May 24, 2020

"People Who Dream"

Psalm 126 & Isaiah 65:17-25

"We were like those who dream..."

Are you finding yourself having more vivid dreams during the pandemic?
Many people are.

"This global pandemic and associated restrictions may have impacts on
how and when we sleep. This has positive effects for some and negative effects
for others. Both situations can lead to heightened recollection of dreams."

Some researchers are having people make written journals of their
dreams about bugs, natural disasters and difficulty breathing. Have you
noticed yourself having more intense, strange and intense dreams during this
pandemic?

Dreaming, of course, is a natural thing for all of us to do when we enter
the REM cycle of sleep.

Then again, maybe you catch yourself in the middle of a Zoom meeting
or online class, daydreaming?

I wonder if we all are doing a little daydreaming about a not-so-distant-time when the pandemic will end, lives will not be threatened with the complications from the virus, people will not die, the economy will recover, and we can all get back to some form of safe, in-person community gatherings.

We are not the only ones to dream such a dream. In our scripture lessons this morning the Psalmist and the prophet Isaiah both speak about the dreams of a people not unlike us.

The Psalmist shares his dream in a harvest psalm sung by the people on their way up to the temple in Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah shares his in a poem.

I love both of their dreams for the promised hope that permeates them. In particular, I was caught up with this one line in Psalm 126. You can almost hear the giddiness in the Psalmist voice as he sings out - **"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream...."**

But alas it is just a great line, because the reality was that not everyone's fortunes had been restored. Many people still suffered in life, physically, emotionally and economically.

The Psalmist knew this and adds this prayer-filled longing at the end of the Psalm: **Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negev. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.**

The prophet Isaiah's poetic dream also points to a future time. Isaiah was active during what scholars call the 2nd Exile Period, also known as the Babylonian exile. A period which began around 586 B.C.E. when the powerful armies of King Nebuchadnezzar overran the southern kingdom of Judah and its capital city Jerusalem, destroying the temple, catering the people off into slavery leaving only a remnant of people (mostly the sick and elderly) behind to hold on to hope and to dream about a future time of reunion, restoration, and redemption.

But the dreams of the people did not fully match up with the reality on the ground. Babylon ended up being a great place to live. Many of those taken into captivity actually prospered, which was not the case for those left behind in Jerusalem.

In addition to their own personal challenges, the people faced the task of rebuilding a whole new economic, political and religious way of life. Their dreams of restoring Jerusalem to its former glory were slowly becoming a nightmare.

When the time came the captives to return home, many chose to stay in Babylon instead of returning to confront the economic and political hardships of life back in Jerusalem.

Thanks Isaiah, you can keep your dream of God's future shalom because we think it is just that - a dream. Who can blame the people for wanting to avoid returning to such a sorry and depressed place to live? What future was there for them?

I would venture to guess that some of us understand very well their decision to stay put in a strange but better place because it did not seem safe to return to their old lives.

Some of us might find we like working from home, attending Zoom meetings, studying on-line, and living quieter, simpler lives that this quarantine has forced upon us.

When an opportunity to re-open and return to the familiar, hectic pace of the lives we once lived, we might say, "Thanks but no thanks. Life is much better for us now."

However, it is not to those people who choose to remain in Babylon that Isaiah spoke his dream; rather it is to those whose lives had been impacted to a greater extent; whose future seemed so bleak. To these people the prophet Isaiah lifted up a vision of God's shalom, a vision that was no "pipe dream" grounded in an escapism mentality that denied reality.

Isaiah knew that a lesser vision of shalom only **"leads to resignation and despair."** (*Paul D. Hanson - Interpretation series - Isaiah 40-66*)

When the people who had remained were overwhelmed with their seemingly hopeless future, the prophet Isaiah invited them not just to dream but to live into God's dream of a new heaven and a new earth, of a new life centered in God's shalom for all people, when those who sowed seeds of tears would reap a new harvest of joy.

In Isaiah's mind it really was not a dream at all but the promised reality of God that they would experience in their own lifetime.

I am not sure what the dreams are of those who sit in seats of political and economic power around the world and in Washington DC are during this pandemic?

I am not sure what the dreams are of those carry seeds of fear and hatred in their hearts and minds simply because of another person's skin color, religious or political beliefs. Or seeking to intimidate other people by carrying assault weapons into public places, threatening violence and death if they do not get their way?

We all have to wrestle with our dark, nightmarish dreams that fill our hearts and minds about others. Yet, those are not the dreams we are called by God to live into as followers of Christ.

What I am sure of is that the dream we are called to live into is God's dream of Shalom for all God's people.

I believe God's dream of Shalom demands of us nothing short of working for the full restoration, reconciliation, and healing of all people, all of creation, all over the world.

I also believe this is the dream that is witnessed to in hospitals and hospices, in homeless shelters and soup kitchens, in dying rural communities and in depressed urban areas, and not just during this global pandemic.

It is the dream dreamed by people whose lives are still being torn apart by acts of gun violence, domestic abuse, unemployment, lack of health care, and worries about where their next meal is coming from.

I believe this is the dream we are called to confidently live into as a congregation, even in the face of overwhelming issues and limited time and resources; refusing to be satisfied with anything less than fully ending world hunger, poverty, health issues, oppression, violence and wars.

Like Isaiah, we know that to work and live for anything less as community of faith betrays God's dream of Shalom.

As one person wrote, **"Only through this communion between the divine and the human can the community of the faithful offer to the world its unique gift, the gift of hope that will not be broken until that day when...the wolf and the lamb..."** (*Paul D. Hanson – Interpretation series – Isaiah 40-66*)

This morning I invited you to dream with me. I still want to invite you to dream with me not because it is my dream but because it is God's dream.

And when we begin to actively dream together we can at last truly experience that perfect feast of thanksgiving.

Amen.

"The River of Dreams" by Billy Joel https://youtu.be/hSq4B_zHqPM

"O For A World" <https://youtu.be/slTeoKoSVAE>

"The Canticle of the Turning" Words: Rory Cooney (1990)
Music: STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN (Irish Traditional Folk Song)
Arrangement by John Ferguson <https://youtu.be/RJH6QNPIRdQ>

ABBA - "I Have A Dream" https://youtu.be/_HMjOiHqE18

"A Head Full of Dreams" Coldplay - <https://youtu.be/vGZMvV9KBp8>

Oh, I think I've landed
In a world I hadn't seen
When I'm feeling ordinary
When I don't know what I mean
Oh, I think I've landed
Where there are miracles at work
For the thirst and for the hunger
Come the conference of birds
And say it's true
It's not what it seems
Leave your broken windows open
And in the light just streams
And you get a head
A head full of dreams
You can see the change you want to
Be what you want to be
When you get a head
A head full of dreams
It's a love, I've just been spoken
With a head full, a head full of dreams
Oh, I think I've landed
Where there are miracles at work
There you've got me open handed
When you got a lost of words
I sing, oh
Oh
Oh
Oh
Oh
Oh
A head full of dreams
Oh
Oh
Oh
A head full of dreams
Oh
It's a love, I've just been spoken
With a head full, a head full of dreams

Source: LyricFind

Songwriters: Chris Martin / Guy Berryman / Johnny Buckland / Mikkel Eriksen /
Tor Hermansen / Will Champion

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"Dream A Little Dream of Me" The Mommas and the Pappas
<https://youtu.be/fJwjLYRPxJY>

"I Have A Dream - Man in the Mirror" The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
and Michael Jackson https://youtu.be/mYyjtZ_OLLs

"I Have a Dream", A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Written and
performed by Grade 5 students at Francis Parker School, 2016. Directed by
Shenelle Williams. https://youtu.be/Q15TiNYfK_A