

# Present Dreams

## March 13, 2016

### Psalm 126, John 12

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On August 28, 1963, the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C.

In that speech, Doctor King saw the day

- when “on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”
- when his four little children would “one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”
- when in the state of Alabama—a place where firehoses and police dogs were unleashed on peaceful protesters—“little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

Over and over, Doctor King chanted, “I have a *dream* today!” The dream is a vision of God’s future. That vision has power in the present—today!

This is the nature of Divine dreaming. The Holy Spirit gives us a vision of God’s future. And the Holy Spirit empowers us to live that dream today. So here is today’s main thought.

#### **Live the dream today!**

The Bible is filled with Divine dreaming. “*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,*” we read in Psalm 126, “*we were like those who dream.*” Six hundred years before Jesus, the people of Judah were defeated and captured by Babylon. They spent seventy years as strangers in a strange land. Then in a matter of months, the Babylonians were defeated. The exiles went home.

Have you ever had one of those moments? It’s that moment when something absolutely unexpected and completely wonderful happens. You say to yourself, “I must be dreaming!” That’s where this psalm begins. It seems too good to be true. But the evidence is clear.

“*Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy,*” writes the psalmist. Foreign observers confirmed the truth, “*The Lord has done great things for them.*” Something truly wonderful has happened.

There is an odd thing about Divine dreaming. In this psalm, the tenses are all mixed up. The Hebrew is in the present tense. Verse one should read, “*With the Lord’s restoration of the fortunes of Zion, we are as dreamers.*” Like Dr. King, the psalmist has a dream...today!

#### **Live the dream today!**

What dream fills our hearts and heads? It is the dream of new life—life that overwhelms death, life that overcomes despair, life that gives healing and hope. Here in the waning days of our Lenten journey, we have Resurrection dreams. The Spirit empowers us to live those Resurrection dreams today.

We see a Divine dreamer in our gospel reading. Mary's brother, Lazarus, was dead—four days in the tomb, cold and stinky dead. Now he is alive! This is a preview of the great victory to come! I wonder if Mary said, "I must be dreaming!" She acts out that Divine dream by anointing Jesus with grateful love. She lives the dream in the here and now.

Judas begins his betrayal here. He refuses to dream.

"What a terrible waste!" he proclaims. "How many poor people could we feed for the price of that perfume?" Jesus cares for the poor. There can be no doubt of that. But the Resurrection life is more than a social service program. It is more than saving some cash for a rainy day. The Resurrection life celebrates the death of death, the end of poverty, and the drying of tears. Mary lives the dream in the here and now.

### **Live the dream today!**

The second half of our psalm is planted in the present. "*May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy!*" We have seen God's future, and his name is Jesus! We are like those who dream, and we dream an empty tomb. "*Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,*" promises the psalmist, "*shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.*"

This is Resurrection talk. "*So it is with the resurrection of the dead,*" Paul writes in First Corinthians fifteen, verse forty-two. "*What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.*" God's harvest is new life with God, now and forever. "*When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality,*" Paul continues in verse fifty-four, "*then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'*"

This is God's dream for the world and for us.

### **Live the dream today!**

How does that work for us? We at Emanuel are like that dreaming psalm writer. We are grateful for how the Spirit is working among us. But what comes next?

I dream of Emanuel Lutheran Church as the beating heart of North Broadway. I dream that when people in our area think "church" they see Emanuel. I dream of a daycare center that nurtures thirty toddlers of all colors and their families with Jesus' love. I dream of a midweek program where fifty children find hope and joy in Jesus through education, fellowship and worship. I dream of a youth program that makes our space available to teenagers needing a safe space to hang out. I dream of a congregation that loves our new neighbors in the old Gunn School, the new Bethany facility, and in the homes and apartments among the hills of our community.

We are living those dreams here and now. That's what the next four years of redevelopment ministry are about. I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to give new life to our neighbors and to find that new life in our community.

### **Live the dream today! Let's pray...**

Pastor Lowell Hennigs  
Emanuel Lutheran Church  
Council Bluffs, Iowa