

There is Still a Dream  
A message shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church  
January 16, 2022  
by Rev. Dave Le Grand

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed:

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, 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. [MLK speech August 28, 1963, March on Washington]

Wow, don't we marvel at the power of that dreamer? But the dream itself, therein lies the true power, the dream of abundant life for all God's children is as old as time itself – the dream of the Source of Dream.

Make no mistake, though, the millions who heard that speech in 1963 felt far from the promised land that Dr. King spoke of. A discordant note, it was, speaking of a day when all children would grow up in safety, regardless of skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, or belief, to become the beloved one God created them to be.

He cast that vision again and again, God's promise, God's dream, but that was anything but the experience of African Americans. All these years later, we know that the dream is not realized. The Dream was lifted up, again and again. That must have been frustrating, the disconnect between God's Dream and lived reality. But still the Dream lives, and we proclaim it today.

Over the millennia, prophets and poets, mystics and muses, the all major faith traditions have sung about the Dream.

What a strange story to imagine, Jesus and his mother. John doesn't name Mary, but she is a major player here. Cana, its location much disputed, but very possibly only about 2 kilometres from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. Tiny villages where everyone knows everyone else. Jesus in the Gospel of John has not even started to preach or heal or challenge the religious elite. He is at a party going sour; the host has committed the disastrous faux pas of underestimating the amount of wine needed for this many-days-long wedding event. This story drips with humour as Jesus' mother reports the problem to her son and asks him to do something. Jesus is lacklustre in his enthusiasm, "This is not my time."

Mary ignores him, directs the stewards to listen to Jesus. Mom saw something that perhaps Jesus didn't. Such a frivolous setting, this is not a miracle with life and death consequences. There isn't even any drama in how Jesus does it. No grand set up, and it is still water as they take it to the host for a taste test.

For John's Gospel, these aren't miracles, they are "signs", pointing to Jesus as God's Beloved. Establishing *where* Cana is doesn't matter, what we are to focus on is the extravagant, even excessive, act of Jesus. Not only is it the finest tasting wine, but it is spilling out of the jars used normally for ritual washing.

You may have noticed over the past couple of years that we have introduced an Acknowledgment of the Traditional Territory in every worship service. More recently we have included a moment for sharing our collective desire to create safe space for

absolutely anyone who chooses to worship or do ministry with us. Now some people might, and they have, said, “Dave, there is always someone who is going to feel excluded.”

It’s true. But when the Spirit teaches us new ways to welcome, we are called to listen to the Spirit, and to be more radically hospitable.

Epiphany brings us Bible stories of God manifested in Jesus. God’s abundant, even to some, excessive, love, that overflows its containers – those containers might be us. Dr. King proclaimed God’s ancient Dream of dignity for all people, not just Israelites, not just those crazy followers of Jesus, not just us. The Dream needs to become rooted in each of us, transforming our bland tendency to flock amongst those who act like us, think like us, and who often look like us. When we become like fine wine, we feel an urge to reach out, to connect with people, parts of Christ’s Body, altogether different. To go with open hearts, open minds, seeing Christ in every face, as Mother Teresa once put it.

The Dream is alive, and seeks to live in our hearts. To stop and say hello to a huddled body along the street. Or perhaps the dream tugs at our heart in this new year to give a little bit more, of our time or treasure, to a non-profit that cares for the most vulnerable. Can we afford it – our time? The cost?

Imagine again those jars overflowing with water. The stewards wondering, “This is just water.” God’s excessive, radical love does that. As the steward carries the cup of water to the host, anxiously, the host sips it and is amazed!

That is the Dream, we are not there, but we are called to cherish it, and to be the fine wine of Love, Hospitality and Grace, especially for those who were excluded from the party. Amen.