

“The dream lives on”

September 6, 2009

Text: Isaiah 35:4-7a, Mark 7:24-37

I.

Our lives as human beings, as Christians, are all about faith; and they're about hope. This hope percolates in our spirit; it shines on—in us and through us. It nudges us always into the possibilities of tomorrow.

Hope is part of our life-blood as human beings, the fruit of God's creative hand. Always, God's vision lives on, God's dream of a new day of peace and shalom; it lives on, through you and through me—through all of us.

We saw our little granddaughter, Annika, on **Skype** video the other day, almost a week old. Her mother, Natasha (our daughter), was holding her . . . prompting her unsuccessfully to open her eyes and have a look at grandma and grandpa. You parents and grandparents out there know what I'm talking about.

When we cast our eyes on these little ones, these miracles of creation, hope is everywhere, isn't it?

In them, we see the future. In them, we see possibilities. In them, we hope and we dream for a better day, for a more promising future, for a day when we move closer to the realization of God's vision.

In us and through us—always—**the dream lives on.**

II.

This past Wednesday, we had a Memorial Service at our church, celebrating the life of **Daisy Ealy**. Daisy was an African-American lady, born in Georgia in 1927, orphaned as a child, who some how found her way down to South Florida where in 1960 she became the house-keeper, for over 45 years, for the Bill and Pat Graham family.

Although she had some schooling, my guess is that Daisy, who never had any children of her own, was mostly self-educated; but there was a down-home wisdom to her that you couldn't miss.

There were two groups of beloved family and friends at Daisy's service: her friends from the wider community and the neighborhoods where she had lived—first in Liberty City and, most recently, in Miami Gardens. And there were the Grahams and some of their friends. Together, they were her family, and you could sense the love.

It was a beautiful experience, the coming together of these two—once totally divided—worlds; moving closer together now ... coming out of the darkness, however slowly and however painfully; breaking down the barriers, leveling the playing field, working our way toward a more just society. It was revealing how Daisy lived in these two worlds.

In the service, you could feel the very human, down-to-earth sharing—**the dream living on**. It lives on, friends, through you and through me. And every day, by the way we live our lives, we lift up the hope that the dream is still alive.

1. The dream (from Amos 6) that *justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream*.
2. The dream (from Isaiah 40) that *every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain*.
3. The dream that sounds out from the mountain tops in Luke 4, when the Lord anoints us to *bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor ...*
4. The dream, announced by Martin Luther King, Jr., a dream deeply rooted in the American dream, that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal.

We're on our way towards the realization of this dream. But as we can tell by the events in recent weeks—around Health Care Reform and, now, the President wanting to speak to the children and youth of America at their school with a message of encouragement and challenge—that we still have a long way to go.

III.

In our reading this morning from Mark's gospel, a woman cannot bring herself to let go of the dream—the dream, the hope that her little girl would be healed from the affliction that had come over her. This young mother, however, was an outsider—a Gentile.

Still, she held on to her dream with the tenacity that only a parent knows when it comes to our children; and she would not let go. When at first, Jesus surprisingly rejects her, saying **It's not fair to take the children's food** (referring to the children of Israel, the Jews), **and throw it to the dogs**, no matter, she won't give up.

Even the dogs, she says to Jesus ... *even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs*. And, moved by her faith, Jesus heals her daughter.

- The point is this mother would not give up. She held fast to the hope that her daughter could be healed.

We all have our stuff, don't we—linked to our hopes and dreams, our longings and yearnings? In all of us the dream lives on. The dream of a better, more just day. Listen to the prophet Isaiah on this:

***Say to those who are of fearful heart, be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.***

Always, wherever there is injustice; wherever the playing field is not level; wherever there is oppression, exploitation; wherever there is no compassion and love; wherever the darkness threatens to overcome the light, God comes.

In a sense, God can't help Godself. Always, God is coming. And what a day it will be, says Isaiah:

*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, And the ears of the deaf unstopped;
Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.*

*For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert;
The burning sand shall become a pool, And the thirsty ground springs of water.*

The dream lives on ...

IV.

Where would we be without our dreams, without our hopes—that the blind will see, the lame will walk and the deaf will hear; like the man in the reading from Mark 7.

Where would we be if we didn't live with the hope that the sickness within us could not be healed, overcome by the sheer goodness of love, compassion and saving grace.

Where would we be if we thought the failings and shortcomings of today were all there is? Where would we be if we didn't believe that everyday the sun rises on our hopes, that anything is possible—that our struggles are only temporary, our sickness short-lived, and our darkness soon to give way to the light.

You may have seen Ted Kennedy, Jr.'s touching words at his father's funeral service last week up in Boston. At age 12, he got cancer and had to have one of his legs amputated. Understandably, he was devastated. However, his dad, Ted Kennedy, Sr., the Senator from Massachusetts, would NOT let him be defeated by this experience.

On a cold, icy, winter day, soon after young Ted, Jr. got his artificial leg, Senator Kennedy invited young Teddy to sled down a hill outside their home. Approaching the nearby hill, it was slippery and Teddy lost his balance and fell.

At the time, he was still adjusting to his new leg and he couldn't see how he would ever, ever, ever make it up that hill. Overcome with sadness, he began to cry. Patiently, lovingly, his father comforted him and then said to him,

I understand how you must feel at this moment. Still, I KNOW you can do it. However long it takes. Even if it takes all day. I KNOW you can do it.

He would not let his son give up or give in. And later, Teddy was able to climb the hill and went on to live a reasonably normal life with his new leg.

V.

The point is, no matter what comes our way in life, no matter what our hardships, failures, mistakes, and sadness, always, always, always, we hope for a better day.

We're not perfect; but, then, we're not supposed to be perfect. All of us are on some path of atonement for something. We're called to faithfulness, not perfection. We're called to be faithful followers of Christ, of the Christian way. And we're called to be people of hope.

Always, hope builds up on the horizon of our longing for wholeness. The hope we live with inspires hope in others. Again, hope inspires—hope, that the infirmed and sick among us can be made whole again; hope, that the set backs of yesterday do not have to determine the possibilities of tomorrow.

Friends, our faith calls us to press on ... to keep after it ... to hold on to our hopes and dreams ... and to remember that what we do or don't do, each day, matters. We ARE God's messengers of hope. We are the vessels through whom God's purposes are realized.

All praise be unto God! Amen!

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