

St. Mary's Sanderstead & St. James Riddlesdown

Easter 3 15.4.18

Dream a dream for God

Acts 3:12-19

The director of music was frustrated with the sporadic attendance of all the choir for the Christmas carol concert where the whole community had been invited.

At the final rehearsal he announced, "I want to personally thank the pianist who has been the only person in this entire choir to attend each and every rehearsal during the past two months." At this, the pianist rose, bowed, and said, "It was the very least that I could do, considering that I won't be able to be at the Christmas Choral Concert tonight!

The dictionary defines being committed as the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause or activity....

So when we think of the things that we believe were committed to, I wonder if that definition fits...

I have a dream....

Beginning with a reference to the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed millions of slaves in 1863, Martin Luther King observed that: "one hundred years later, black people were still not free".

Towards the end of his speech, he departed from his prepared text and instead gave us "I have a dream", which was prompted by Jackson's cry: "Tell them about the dream, Martin.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther king whose dream inspired people to act...

His dream cost him his life....but that dream began a revolution that continues today...

The central element of the Easter story is of God's commitment to us of the dream he had for the freedom of humanity, the moment Adam disobeyed....

For centuries he waited for the right moment to send Jesus and then Jesus waited for 30 years for the right moment

Because this King also had a dream.... a dream which cost him his life too...

But where was his revolution....

The disciples had been in hiding and the message which Jesus had lived, shown, and shared with them for 3 years seemed doomed to remain behind locked doors...

The disciples had failed their master; they had run away when he'd needed them most. One of them had betrayed him, another had denied him and I imagine that they were all feeling pretty wretched about everything.

I don't know about you but I've felt like that at times too...times when I know I could have done good and didn't, times when I knew that I needed to share my faith and didn't, times when I just let God down....

When I was doing some youth work at a Pentecostal church I used to see a man walk past the church with his head bowed. He didn't look much, he was always scruffy and I doubt that his life meant very much to many.... I often wondered what was wrong but I never asked him.

One day I sensed God say to me to talk to that man and to let him know that he loved him....

I didn't...

I chickened out because I thought he would laugh at me or worst still be abusive.

I didn't see him again, but I later found out that not long after my last sight of him, he died....

I never forgot him nor did I forget my own failure in telling him that God loved him beyond measure....

Disciples of Jesus get it wrong...but they don't have to remain that way....

We read that as the disciples were sitting in the upper room something marvellous happened...God turned up and within 2 chapters of the book of Acts these petrified men are out preaching and healing and making Gods dream a reality....for In response to a man begging for money the disciples make him walk...

And this is where our text today begins this morning....with the temple audience's reaction to this event....

Both Peter and John want everyone to know that its nothing to do with them...they can claim no glory for what has happened to this man and they point to Jesus, as being the one who has done this miracle....Being Jews they remind those listening of the Old Testament promises pointing to what the prophets of old had only dreamed....that the God of the Old Testament, the God who had called the Jews to be his own possession had arrived in the person of Jesus...

.....that in the words of Isaiah the prophet the disciples in the power of Jesus were doing what God had dreamed all along....

"Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God. ...He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened

And the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then *the lame shall leap like a deer* and the tongue of the dumb sing....

God puts each on of us upon this earth for a reason and he has a plan and a dream for our lives and wants to use us beyond what any of us could every possibly imagine.

I doubt very much that Peter and John when they were sat in the locked upper room fearing for their lives imagined that within a couple of weeks they would be standing before the very people who bade for Jesus execution, and also wanted theirs.....using a lame man, now walking as proof that the one they killed was alive again and had given them power.

We often have a problem when it comes to God's purpose for our lives, we put up barriers that say:

“How could God ever use someone like me?”

God doesn't know how I think...how I often feel...how insignificant I am....

But the scriptures are full of people who said exactly that...Moses said I can't, Jonah said I wont, and countless others gave excuses as to why God couldn't or shouldn't use them....

But each and every one of these people gave in to Gods dream and saw something marvellous happen in return.....

And it doesn't end with the bible.....

A young man of 20, was asked by his to dad who was himself a minister, to pastor an Inner City Church in Los Angeles.

The first day that Mathew was at the Church it had a congregation of forty people. But instead of growing under his young and enthusiastic leadership, the church began to lose people. The situation became more and more alarming as week by week there was less and less people sat in the chairs....

Mathew's despair came to breaking point one Sunday night when he showed up to church and found himself to be the only one there.

He'd prepared a sermon, and out of the sheer determination decided that he would preach it anyway albeit to an empty church.

Despondent, he went home, his mind full of questions and doubts. Had God really called him? what was wrong with his leadership?

It was a restless night, and around 2:30 in the morning, Mathew knew that God was talking to him, telling him to go down to Echo Park, in one of the very worst districts of Los Angeles.

At the risk of his own safety, he followed God's instructions, and when he got to the park he was horrified to see the destruction of humanity, the effects of sin, and the hopeless despair written on the faces of the people there.

But it was in the middle of that horrible scene that Mathew's eyes were opened to the pain that was in the world, and then and there he started to dream.

He dreamed of a church that would never sleep, so that no matter what day it was, and what time of day you found yourself in, you could go to that church and get help.

You could show up at three in the morning and get help with your addiction to heroin. You could go there if you had just gotten out of school and you knew that it wasn't safe to go home.

You could go there if you were in danger, and you could go if you were in need. You could go to that church if you just wanted to know what real love even felt like.

Mathew Barnett made a solemn promise to serve his community and the Church began to experience growth as it began to reach into and transform Los Angeles.

One day a conversation was overheard. It was between two boys, and one of them was trying to describe the church, but he didn't have the right language. He described it to his friends as the place where a guy could learn how to dream again, and so the Los Angeles Dream Centre found it's new name.

God had a dream, Martin Luther king had a dream, and
Matthew Barnett had a dream....i wonder do you?

Pope John Paul once said

“Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams.

Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled
potential.

Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but
with what it is still possible for you to do.

The apostles didn't stay in that locked room, they didn't let fear
frustration, failure or the past hold them back.... they prayed
and when God came and infused within them his dream which
began a revolution that turned the world upside down....

This is the Jesus revolution which we are all called to be a part
of...to go into the world and to make disciples of all nations.....

My friends God had a dream.... and his words to us are
...Tell them about the dream....**Amen.**