

A sermon preached at Zion, North Branford
January 19, 2020 Martin Luther King Weekend
Text: An excerpt from MLK's "I have a Dream" speech 1963
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The dreams that come to us as we sleep can be so odd. In them, we can do amazing things, we can return to places from long ago; we can fly- those are my favorite. Or we can find ourselves acting out the anxieties we harbor about our performance or our obligations. I used to have a dream in which I hadn't completed all the requirements needed for graduation. Now I have one in which I am preaching in a strange place, have no idea when the service starts, have no shoes on, and the printer is broken.

Other dreams are like visions, when we can see so clearly the right path to take, when the solution to a problem is right there in front of us, crystallized and complete. These types of dreams are powerful forces. They can put ideas into motion and when followed, can change the future. These are the kinds of dreams which God has put on the hearts of prophets and saints throughout the centuries.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, had dreams that angered his brothers and almost got him killed. But ultimately, his dreams saved his people and the people of Egypt. Solomon had a dream in which God said, "Ask what I shall give you." Joseph of Nazareth had a dream that saved his young family. Paul of Tarsus had a dream in which a Gentile said, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Following his dream and accepting Gentiles into the Way of Jesus caused a great deal of conflict for Paul.

And then there was Martin of Atlanta, Georgia, who had a dream in which he saw the world without hatred or prejudice, a world where children of all races and nationalities could live and play in harmony. In Martin's dream, the world was a place in which all would be judged, not on their appearance or their differences, but on the content of their character. His dream made people so angry, it got him killed.

Episcopal theologian Verna Dozier believed that God has a dream, and that we are called to be the realization of that dream. In her book, *The Dream of God: A Call to Return*, she wrote, "The dream of God is that all creation will live together in peace and harmony and fulfillment. All parts of creation. And the dream of God is that the good creation that God created – what the refrain says, 'and God saw that it was good' – will be restored."

Our catechism puts God's dream this way "that with God's help we may live in harmony with God, within ourselves, with our neighbors, and with all creation." We pray for this dream of God every week when we pray the prayer that Jesus taught-that this dream of God's will come on earth as it is in heaven. And as we pray, we are changed; transformed in such a way that God's dream can become our dream. This was foretold by the prophet Joel, who said that in those days, both men and women will prophesy, and both the old and the young will dream dreams.

The world needs more dreamers, those who take the dreams of God seriously, and those who listen, like Martin Luther King did, to the dreams God puts on our hearts. This week, I invite you to take the time to dream with God. Before you fall asleep, or perhaps when you first wake up, lounge a bit and dream with God. What does that dream look like to you? What does the world look like through the lens of God's desire? How might your workplace or school, our congregation and communities be transformed if God's dream were to be realized? If we were,

with God's help, living in harmony with God, with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with all creation?

Martin Luther King said in a sermon that, to expect God to do everything while we do nothing, is not faith, but superstition. So it is important to ask, how might we participate in these dreams of God that we have received?

In his famous poem "Dreams," Langston Hughes (1902–1967), the African-American poet, novelist, and playwright, urged us not to forfeit our dreams.

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

We dare not let Martin's dream die. This American prophet, saint, and martyr saw so clearly what God held out for us-A promise of a truly great nation-Made stronger by unity-Made more just by diversity-Made more faithful by love and action.

So, let us live out the dreams of God. Let us follow God's vision which was written in Scripture and written on the hearts of those who love God. Amen.