

Remember

26 May 2019

Earlier this week Fr. Carey asked me to bring our message this morning. I happened to catch a segment on one of our local TV stations about a young woman who had lost her dad when she was very young. He died in combat in Vietnam. She had never known him. Yet, she said, she dreamed of him and in those dreams he spoke to her.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles Paul is confronted by a dream – called a vision in the Scriptures. As one translation puts it, “During the night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”

Is there anything to dreams? Is there anything prophetic – is God really speaking to us in them – or are they just the imaginings of our unconscious? Was the woman who had never known her dad just expressing her loneliness and sadness about a dad she had never seen? Maybe Paul in telling of his vision was expressing his own uncertainty about where he was going, what he was doing. And what he was doing was no “walk in the park.” He had gone through a major crisis and break-up with his friend and co-worker. Paul had suggested to Barnabas that they re-visit some of the communities in which they had already established churches. Barnabas recommended they take John Mark with them. Paul did not want to include John Mark because Paul felt he had let them down in a serious way earlier. And this disagreement about whether to include John Mark in their work led to the two friends literally going in two different directions. And as sort of parenthetical aside or “Oh, by the way” we also learn that Paul and his co-workers “[are] kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in Asia.” As the old poem says “two roads converged in a wood” – one takes you to Asia and the other takes you to Europe – and the Holy Spirit tells you to go to Europe. So the Christian Church ends up in Europe rather than Asia. So now you know. And Paul ends up in Troas where he has his dream – his vision of the man from Macedonia.

Rather than just leaving the subject of dreams out there flapping on the ground so to speak let’s talk about dreams – is there anything to them? I’m certainly no expert – if there are any – and I suspect there is probably not much to many of them. But sometimes we have a dream that is so real – that

**so speaks to us – that I believe there is more to it than just the “imaginings of our subconscious.”**

**There is, I am told, new versions of our liturgy which will include the phrase, “Listen to what God is saying to His people.” Not a bad expression when we listen to or speak words from our Scriptures.**

**So a fair question: What is God saying to us in this reading from Acts we are studying this morning? What is its significance to us?**

**He is saying “Go!**

**He is saying “Go!” to Paul in no uncertain terms.**

**Shortly after they make it to Macedonia, specifically the city of Philippi. And after only a few days to get settled -After a trip covering a good bit of ground including a good stretch going by water – the scripture tells us “they “ went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer.”**

**A couple of years ago I went with a group of Episcopalians on a visit to England. It was about a week or so after some terrorists ran some people off one of the bridges across the Thames. People were hurt and lives were lost. The priest who led our group called our tour an “ Anglican Pilgrimage.” Sunday was our “off” day and we could visit any church of our choice. A friend and I visited St. Anne’s Limehouse in East London and spent the rest of day walking around London until a get-together at the home of an English friend of our tour leader late afternoon.**

**I suspect you could care less about my travel itinerary. I thought about it, however, in preparing this message. That Sunday afternoon in London – a beautiful sunny day in London – we happened to walk through a park on the riverside with a great view of the Tower of London and the London Bridge – and here in this park were all these people – families, children, joggers, sunbathers, picnickers enjoying themselves and the day. At the time I thought how unusual, how remarkable, all these Londoners were enjoying the day almost within sight of the bridge on which these terrorists had done their evil just days before.**

**But now I can see its applicability to what Paul and his team did within days of landing in Philippi – they went to where the people were. If you’re going to share the good news with people you go to where the people are.**

**And I keep thinking about the circumstances about how Paul was led to go one way and his friend, maybe former friend went another. Notwithstanding what was a serious quarrel between them they kept going. Maybe there is lesson for us as well. When we have serious disagreements we talk about it, we try to resolve it as best we can – but we keep going. When we hear the call to Macedonia we keep going. We remember whose we are and we keep going.**

**I don't know if I've really answered the question I raised about dreams. I don't know the young woman personally whose dad died as a young American soldier in combat in Vietnam. Did he in fact speak to her in dreams?**

**I believe He did. And this weekend – this Memorial weekend – would be a good time to spend time with family, friends – but in the doing of that it would be a good time to remember all those like the young soldier in Vietnam to say a prayer of thanks, of remembrance – as well as to remember those like his daughter – who are still hurting, still recovering.**

**I believe there is a God. I believe He loves us. I believe He loves that young woman. I believe He loves her dad.**

**I believe He loves Paul. I believe He wanted Paul to go to Macedonia.**

**I've heard that there is a sign at the city limits of a certain town – it would be in Texas, of course – that says “ 99 Good folks and one old grouch.” I believe God loves the folks here at St. Luke's even including the one old grouch. And I think God has touched the lives of many here at St. Luke's because of all the signs – the outreach to homeless, to veterans, to those needing clothes, to the community generally in programs of great music, even great drama. I think God has touched the lives of many at St. Luke's through the beauty and vigor of our services which are faithful to the great traditions of our Anglican heritage and to preaching God's love to a hurting world.**

**As most of you know I live in scenic North Pulaski County. And my route to church is via Soon to be Interstate but now only Highway 167. And just before I get to Interstate 40 and zip back to the West there to the right is a massive apartment building project going up. Who are all the people who are going to live there? A voice in in my ear asks me. Where are they going to church or do they even go to a church? That same voice asks me.**

**Let me ask you to do one more thing. You could even ask it in your prayers before you go to bed tonight. “God, are we doing enough to share your good News?”**

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**“Peace I leave with you;**

**My peace I give to you.**

**I do not give as the world gives.**

**Do not let your hearts be troubled,**

**And do not let them be afraid.”**

**Amen.**