

### PAINTING A DAYDREAM

The Revelation passage we just read is a brilliant vision of the Holy City, with the “river of the water of life,” and the trees for food and healing.

This message is deep in symbolism and metaphor, ...and the pictures depicted are familiar, too; they are images that were also presented in Ezekiel and in the book of Psalm.

These images are comforting and soothing; they bring a sense of “home” for the Jewish Christians in the NT church, and we are familiar with them, also. They radiate hope and God’s redemption.

It is nice to read them over and over again, and to read them out loud. BUT, don’t take them literally. They are not predictions, but rather visions....

The passage is a daydream..... A daydream full of hope and solace.

The same is true for the Psalm passage that we read as our call to worship.

Psalm 67 is a blessing in song– rendering a much desired and hoped for balance and harmony in life. It is an optimistic song!

The hymns that we sing are similar. Many present optimistic, hopeful messages, and .... they are familiar.

New songs can tantalize and surprise, But the old, often sung hymns soothe the soul and grant hope. Singing familiar songs actually releases dopamine, and we like that.

Today, we sang #323, again. We sang it two weeks ago; even so, we enjoyed the vision of a “New World Coming” and the sense of the familiar.

Hopeful, repetition can bring the warmth of a campfire, and the boast of potential / of... “What if...”

It is good to dream. It is good to imagine a better way, a better world.

And, it is okay to cast our sorrows into a comforting, peaceful conception of life beyond the now. It is healthy and invigorating to have a positive view of the future.

We don’t live in daydreams, but we need to dream / to have visions.

Daydreams of tranquillity, harmony, and the absence of conflict have warmed the souls of humans since the beginning of “self reflection” and from the time we humans first asked “Why... and Why NOT?”

When life is uncomfortable, undesirable and painful, we conjure up images of a better time, a better way. We all do it.

And, we tend to move to our dreams. We even are willing to remove barriers and inhibitions, when we dream.

A good example of this is when a tragedy strikes an area, such as a hurricane, a tornado or earthquake. Because of the dream of revitalization / of restoration....most people unite, roll up their sleeves and pitch in – bringing the hope to reality.

Even so, it doesn't take a calamity to get us dreaming.

There are many reasons to ponder / to speculate on better times, and those visions vary with each person and each generation.

My parents grew up in a very different era. Their dreams were very different. And, often their hopes were for safety and to be free from illness.... and to be able to overcome sickness, too.

They didn't have antibiotics, when they were young.

When I grew up, I recall all the precautions taken to prevent "catching a cold", such as "don't go out in the cold with wet hair.

Their idea of soothing, hopeful comfort entertainment was the Lawrence Welk Show. To this day, I still do not understand the appeal in that show.

However, I better be careful what I say.

We boomers get "warm fuzzies" listening to music that is 45 years old.

The other day, I watched some TV commercials from my childhood on YouTube: reminded me of home, when I was a child.

That is reminiscing, but it was conjuring up old dreams, too, and which was nice.

Reminiscing is fine—occasionally, but too many trips down memory lane tends to make a person depressed..... and ....lost.

Each person, each generation, each culture forms their own dreams.

When the present situation is troubling, draining and painful, ... we need to dream.

To keep going, we need an image that declares that life will be better, that things will be okay.

Even when things are going fine, we need to daydream / we need to have a vision for improvement.

We dare not settle for the mundane/ the routine / the status quo.

John Lennon once put such a daydream into a song called "Imagine."

..... Imagine peace. Imagine. .... Imagine a world as one, in unity.

We do dream for a better tomorrow.

We have those sort of dreams for our children.

We have good visions/ hopes for our children.

When Jessica was born, I hoped that she would grow up in a world that treated women with respect and equal opportunities.

When Katherine was young I dreamed that she would not be affected by the culture of fear.

And, I hope that someday my grandson will ask, "What is war?"

Those dreams helps motive me. I want to do my part to make that ideal happen, not only for Sasha, but for all children.

Dreams ..... inspire us.

I think that is part of the problem with politics these days.  
Politicians are not sharing their dreams,..... if they have them?

I want a politician to paint a picture for me. I want her to inspire me with her vision for the future. I want to get excited about making our nation a better place for everyone.

Bits and pieces of legislation can bore citizens.  
Give US a dream!

Martin Luther King Jr. was wonderfully correct when he shared his dream, so long a go. His dream inspired people, and the legislation that helped make it happen, followed..... after the dream.

I have NO idea what any of our leaders, of any party, are dreaming about. They need to share their daydreams for our nation.

Can we dream about a country where everyone is treated with respect, where everyone has an equal opportunity of success, in spite of how people look or where they live or used to live ... or where they went to school.... or if they are aboriginal ..... or if they are poor..... or if their preferences are different than our own?

Can we envision a future where we send social workers, doctors and construction people into troubled and depressed areas, instead of soldiers with guns?  
*I can see lots of opportunities for MCC in that vision.*

Also, can we dream about a world that appreciates moderation and self restraint – simple living.  
....This would be a world where nature can thrive... with humans, and the successful would self-limit so that others can have a chance. There would be Jubilee, and.....There would be NO exploitation of the weak,....in **this** future.

I like those dreams!

BUT, ...I can almost hear the skeptics heckling.....and dismissing such dreams as frivolous idealism. I know people like that. They think pacifists are naive and idealistic, and they proudly proclaim that they are REALISTS.

:)

Someone recently clarified, that Reality is in the present, in the now!

A person who seeks to be practical can NOT look to the future and claim to be a realist. It just doesn't make sense.

I realist sees only the present moment.

Moreover, it would certainly be a pitiful and puny dream if it was restricted to what is practical.

When it comes to replacing a lawn mower or deciding what to do with my pay cheque, then I need to be practical.

I surely don't want my dreams to be practical!

In regards to dreaming, ...Practical is limited thinking. Practical is fearful thinking. For the most part, Practical is stagnant.

Our hopes and our dreams inspire us. We reach for them. We change and pray for them. They feed our soul and flavour our ambitions.

We point ourselves in the direction of our dreams.

Our desire to follow Christ is based on Hope,..... well.... I trust it is.

For some, I think it may be based on fear,.... and that is truly sad.

Fear or hope motivates us into action.

Fear renders ugly results,.... and it often leads to destruction and hate.

The claim to be a **realist** or a **pragmatist** is really a disguise for the cynic who is actually a pessimist. And, I think pessimism is fear based,..... and pessimism is definitely not the way of Christ.

Dreamers are optimists,.....and Big Dreamers have a better grasp of what it means to follow Christ.

To be sure, dreaming is a luxury for those with a history and reasons for hope. Some are not so fortunate.

Poverty is NOT a condition of being short on funds.

Nor is Poverty merely lacking adequate resources to provide basic needs, .... although those things can lead to poverty and generally do.

Poverty is that state of hopelessness. It is the inability to reach for dreams, and when there are no inspiring visions to lead the way, then it is impossible to delay gratification.

Oh, and contemplating what to do if "I win millions from the lottery is NOT dreaming,.... it is instead foolishness and sad.

To live vibrant and joyful lives, we need to dream. We need a picture with our selves in it, and that picture needs to include others, too, such as those stuck in poverty. Money alone can't solve poverty; dreams are necessary.

In the John passage, Jesus presented images of how things will be in the future, after he is gone.

It is an **enhanced** image.... laced with challenge and REAL HOPE.

Jesus projects people of love, being loved and being as Christ.

And, they will have the comfort of HOME and there will be rejoicing. In addition, there will be peace.

Verse 27: "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

In this reassuring image are the comforting concepts of the familiar—of home, and there are the soothing pictures to dream about that include love, rejoicing, of NOT being afraid or troubled, .... and of course... the image of peace.

And, ... the part that keeps this image from “popping” like an illusion, is the aspect that God is in the dream.

This Not just an illusion “floated out there” to wish upon.  
God is crafting this vision by Investing God’s self into it.

God is putting God’s self in this image / this dream for tomorrow.

God is working to make it happen

God has provided the canvas, and through the Holy Spirit, we are granted the brushes, the pigments and all the tools we need....to paint.

There is a similar message in the Acts text, which we didn’t read.

Last week, it was Peter who had a dream about being inclusive.... and he helped paint that dream.

In Today’s Acts passage, Paul had a dream in the night, and it must have been very intense because it became real. It moved beyond the dream level when he chose to invest himself into it. He acted on this vision. He set sail to the place where the vision called him to go. And, God was part of that vision too.

Together, Paul and God.....they moved into the future, into the vision.

**They were painting the dream.**

Granted, Paul’s vision was pretty simple.

Going to Macedonia is one thing. Envisioning the future ministry of a church is a little more expansive. And, having a vision for world justice and peace, is well.... much bigger.

Even so, the concept, the process is the same.

The path to our vision begins with God’s investment and ours, and it continues that way: doing justice, doing love and kindness and walking humbly with God!

In church language we call it being saved. But, we could also call it “Painting a daydream.”

Are you and I being saved? Is God involved in the world?

Is God’s kingdom growing around us, in spite of current events?

?????????

I believe so.

We can look at life from the printer's ink or on the TV screen which is filled with pictures of death, torture and injustices.

But, we can also look at life on the canvas of the divine.

These days, the world and our country is debating peace and justice issues. World leaders are discussing the health of the environment.

People around the globe are demanding respect for all humans and for government humility. We want our governments accountable.

The support for the distant, barely felt war in Afghanistan is less than 50%.

Seventy, Sixty, even forty years ago and I don't believe there would be so many people questioning the concept and justification for war.

More and more, people are caring about our planet and investing in the dream for a healthier natural world. We're trying to consume less and most people recycle. We're discovering hope through nature.

Forty years ago, only those labelled fanatics and extremists petitioned for care of the earth, protecting dolphins or seals..... or.... having smoke free restaurants.

Another example,

I can vividly recall a family trip through the American south in 1964.

As a child, I witnessed many things that didn't make sense.

Thanks, in part to Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, children driving through the south today, will no longer ask, "Why aren't the coloured people allowed to drink from the same drinking fountain or go to the same restaurant as fair skinned people?"

When a few people are bold enough to dream, the hopeful vision will inspire others to add their paint brush.

Now we can buy fair trade products.

No longer do we have TV commercial of the likes of "Mrs. Olsen" coming to the rescue of a fearful housewife who couldn't make good coffee for her husband. We value respect and equality, now.

These days, everybody is free to marry whom they love, and we are increasingly concerned about justice and fairness, even so..... There are many things to dream about.

People of grace, of justice and peace **are** proclaiming a vision that is **developing** on God's canvas. There are many examples, including MCC. Peace in the Public Square is another example.

There are glimpses of God's unfolding kingdom here on earth, yet there is still much to be done. There are still reasons to dream.

The vision / hope is still pulling at our hearts.

The future can be better. It can be as Christ lived for....

There is war. There is too much injustice and exploitation. There is too much suffering. There is too much greed. And, the mass media is still glorifying redemptive violence.

So, we still have reasons to live, reasons to be, reasons to dream, and dreams to envision.

In closing, I'll explain the pictures in the bulletin.

The pictures are copies of two paintings by Edward Hicks.

Prof. Alan Kreider of AMBS told about the artist Edward Hicks, at the MC Sask. Assembly, this past February.

Notice how similar the paintings are.

They are based on Isaiah 11: verses 6 and following. That passage presents a picture of peace where even the wolf and the lamb and the lion and the cow live peacefully together.

Edwards Hicks wanted to inspire his world, back in the early 1800s, to embrace peace, especially in regards to how the aboriginals were treated, so he put his dream to canvas, using Isa. 11 image as a template.

He painted ONE HUNDRED variations of this image; 62 are still in existence, today. He painted it over and over again to get the message across; he didn't give up.

As you know, ART is the opposite of WAR, and so doing art helps make the world a better place.

I think that was part of Hick's inspiration. Art creates and is contagious.

\*Jesus left, and left us a challenge / a vision:

We can breathe until you breathe no more..... OR.

With God's help through the Power of the Holy Spirit, we can Live / BE ALIVE .... by painting your dream!

Dream,.... and paint your daydream.

It is NOT too late!

The world, Canada, Osler, our church all NEED your Brush Strokes.

Dream and pour yourself into it!

With God's help..... paint your daydream.