

10 February 2019 4th before Lent St Thomas

I may have told you before that I speak perfect Franglais. My French, (I am ashamed to say) is not very good. I get by. After all I never go thirsty in a French Bar. Have you heard about the child learning French? He was told that he was getting somewhere in the language when he dreamed in French. One day he triumphantly announced to his teacher that he'd had this most amazing dream about his holiday in France. "It was all in French", he said, "What were they talking about?" asked his teacher. "Couldn't understand a word they were saying." he said

When I was in training I had the privilege of working with someone who had worked with Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King's most famous speech was about 'I had a dream'. In the Bible dreams are often referred to as 'visions' - perhaps dreams of 'what might be'... Dreams - do you ever dream - or perhaps you claim not to? Perhaps you are dreaming now - day dreaming and wondering what I am on about?

Of course, the idea of dreams is a recurring theme in the Bible.

There's the famous story of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Genesis 41:25-27 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

Or in the Christmas story we celebrated only a few weeks ago. Matthew 1:20-23 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So does this mean that I'm suggesting that we all have notebooks by our bedsides and try and write down our dreams? I'm not so sure that dreams are that easy to interpret or should be relied upon.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Have you ever met a steam railway enthusiast. (I got talking to the MEO on a ship I was on once - I made the fatal mistake of looking as though I was really interested. He waxed lyrical about the steam railway he worked on when he wasn't at sea. I must have made all the right noises because before long he'd sent me details of how to sign up to his steam railway preservation society. Do you remember Fred Dibner and his steam roller - a pile of rust that he rebuilt. Some people thought he was a dreamer, but the reality was that he could dream about what it might be like. We might say that he had a dream. In reality he had a vision what might be...

Gillian and I say that we are cursed with the ability when we are looking at houses to be able to see what might be and not what is there. Then much later on we end up asking the same question. What on earth persuaded us to buy yet another place to do up...

We are approaching Lent which is a time of reflection and preparation. We prepare to remember the events that are at the very heart of the Gospel we share. The fact that in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus we are redeemed. God's love and forgiveness revealed to us in the sacrifice of his only Son. The resurrection life that we share, revealed in the resurrection joy of Easter morning. The promise of eternal life to all who proclaim Jesus as Lord. God's transforming love changing us and bringing wholeness and true meaning to our lives in this world and in the world to come.

The only good reason for Lenten discipline is if we share in that vision with God of what we might be like - transformed and redeemed. With God's grace sharing in the work of creation. If you dream, then dream with me that in Christ we will all be made alive.

I believe in Christ we are given a vision of what we might be like... In Revelation we hear of a dream of a New Heaven and a New Earth. Rev. 21:1;4: "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,'

A young Youth Pastor returned from a major conference he had just attended. He was really excited. And one of the things that touched him the most was something Bruce Wilkinson told them to do: "Get a dream from God that is so big that only God can take you there. Then ask the Lord to show you how to get there."

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I am glad to tell you that in some ways, our church is already a dream church. We have great fellowship, the beginnings of a great Junior Church, a great traditional choir singing fantastically well to the glory of God, we have strong prayer warriors and many generous people working, praying, working out their faith in the local community and beyond. Living out their faith and witnessing to Christ their Lord.

I also want you to know that in many ways this church is a dream-come-true for me and Gillian. I wonder how many other people in a few mile circle need to find our dream-come-true?

-May God help us to reach as many of those people as we possibly can.

In the words of Ecclesiastes 5:7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore fear God.