

The band “Metric” has a song called “Twilight Galaxy” which has a line that really resonates with me, it goes, “Did they tell you, you should grow up - When you wanted to dream?” As a child I was instructed of the path that I had to take. The path required a university education, a respectable job, and marrying a man. When I talked about my dreams, ones that didn’t conform to these expectations, of adopting 13 children from all parts of the world, so I would have a family soccer team (with two spares) – these dreams were dismissed as childish musings. Dreams were something that the adults around me didn’t encourage. Maybe they were afraid, because sometimes dreams bring with them the need to act in ways that are controversial – that demand change – and that may be dangerous; maybe they were trying to protect me....

It’s taken years to unlearn false boundaries – and learn that all things are possible when we listen to the Spirit, as she fills us with dreams of the Kingdom of God. A kingdom that is here and now, and has no boundaries, no impossibilities, where we are all loved unconditionally and peace breaks out!

This week we observed Dr Martin Luther King Jr. day; a man who implored us to dream of a new world order. In his speech at the end of the

54 mile march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the Rev Dr Martin

Luther King Jr said

" How long will justice be crucified, and truth bear it?"

I come to say to you this afternoon, however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because "truth crushed to earth will rise again." How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

Dr King reminded us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus... He believed

in the kingdom of God, in the here and now... but that we all had a role in

bringing it to its fullness; who reminded us that,

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

It is up to us to bring light and love to the world and to open our eyes to the evidence of this: to the wonders of the earth, to the people that speak out against silencing the press, to those that speak of love and non-violence, to those that welcome in the sojourner, to those that care for loved ones, visit the captives, and feed those in need with the sustenance of life.

When Jesus reads in the temple, he's doing what is normally expected of a young Jewish man. It would have been typical for the Torah to have been passed around to the men to read aloud. Jesus reads the familiar text from the Prophet Isaiah... "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent

me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the world” – The passage is a dream of hope and promise... It’s a prophesy of the year of Jubilee, when all debts are erased and all are freed. It’s a prophesy of the expected Messiah, the anointed one, who will bring freedom from oppression. Then, Jesus proclaims that in their hearing, it is fulfilled. It is now! The kingdom is here in the person of Jesus.

And at first, this is a welcomed piece of amazing news! At first, “all spoke well of Jesus and wondered at the gracious words”... at the proclamation of freedom from their oppressors, the Romans, of the promise of the forgiveness of debts, of a promise that President Obama would call one of ‘audacious hope’! Yet... as suddenly as Jesus’ words are graciously received, in the verses that follow, the people place obstacles. The truth is too good to be true, the dream is too much! This can’t be right... this is Jesus, son of Joseph, he’s one of us, why does he think he’s so special? He’s from here, from Nazareth -- our backwater town. Nothing good comes out of Nazareth! Then the people remember that Jesus also spread this news in Capernaum and there he performed miracles. Why isn’t he doing the same thing here, in his home town? Capernaum is filled with outsiders,

non-Jews... Why are we being treated worse than them? Even when Jesus reminds them that the word of God is for all, reminds them that the great prophets Elijah and Elisha, did not restrict their ministries to the Hebrews --- The dream of hope and liberation quickly turns to anger -- or fear, and just as quickly -- to violence...

I know it's so hard to listen fully to the views of others when they radically differ from our own, especially if they are attacking us or our identities. In those instances, it's hard to find the good that may reside in the other... and so the dialogue is never opened and ideas get entrenched and anger and fear rise – and nothing changes. And, I know, it's especially hard to accept change. This is something we've all experienced over the past couple of years, with the future still so uncertain to us all, and it's exhausting! It's even hard to accept change when that change promises hope, abundance, freedom, love and peace. How many of you are familiar with thinking at some point in your life, "better the devil you know than the devil you don't".... we're often just too afraid to take a risk, even if that risk promises the betterment of all. Yet, remember the words we heard in Nehemiah, "do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is our strength"!

The Gospel repeatedly reminds us not to fear. Because fear is so often at the root of the obstructions we put between God's promise and

ourselves. Fear is why we don't always allow God's love into our hearts, or God's peace – or accept the universality of the Spirit. How many among us resist love because we fear we are unlovable? How many of us compete for favour, just as Peter and James fought for Jesus' favour, even though God loves us all infinitely? The mob in Luke's Gospel is formed because they begin to question why Jesus doesn't perform the miracles he performed in Capernaum... As the Rev. Fred Craddock points out, "Jesus does not go elsewhere because he is rejected; he is rejected because he goes elsewhere"¹ – the dream got too big, too out of control, too widespread? What did they fear, that it may threaten their way of life?

Living out the Kingdom of God requires us to have imaginative empathy. It requires us to let go of fear because as Thomas Merton put it, fear quashes creativity and freedom. It requires us to see the world from another's point of view – to act as president Obama asked of us in his farewell speech – outside our bubbles, of like-minded people, of social media friends who all think like us. To live, without fear, the dream of the kingdom that Jesus showed us in his words and actions.

¹ Craddock, Fred, B., 1990. Luke. Interpretations: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, p. 63.