

## **Advent Dreamtime Advent 3 – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

### ***Readings:***

**Isaiah 61: 1-4, Psalm 126, John 1: 6-8, 19-28**

In that old popular cartoon strip “Peanuts,” Charlie Brown and Lucy are going through their familiar psychiatrist-patient routine. In front of the booth with its hand-scrawled sign, “Psychiatric Help, 5c”, Charlie Brown asks his “doctor” girlfriend about the function of dreams, and she replies ‘The dreams of the night prepare you for the day that follows... It is at night when you are sleeping that your brain is really working.... Trying to sort out everything for you..... Trying to make you see yourself as you really are.’ Charlie Brown turns away dejectedly, saying, “Even my brain is against me!” Poor Charlie Brown, self esteem was never his strong suit.

But hands up all those who have dreams...  
Keep your hands up if you remember your dreams...  
Do any of you keep a pad by your bed to record the dream, because I know I forget mine nearly as soon as I wake?

But dreaming is important. Sometimes it’s about processing all the rubbish that happens during the day. At other times it is about exorcising fears or pointing to deep wishes that we dare not utter in the daylight, and for many of us our dreams are a bridge to the not-yet. Dreaming is important. And we are now just appreciating our aboriginal brothers’ and sisters’ stories about the Dreamtime.

So I wonder, this Advent are any of you dreaming?

In preparing for this sermon I googled “Christmas Dreaming” and ran into sappy songs about winter wonderlands and decorated trees and I wondered if such vacuous dreams truly represent what we dream for as we approach Christmas. Take a few moments to talk to a neighbour (not one you live with) and share your advent dreaming in this lead up to Christmas.....

When Christian missionaries came to Australia in the 19th Century, I’m surprised that they did not make more of the Aboriginal Dreamtime, for dreaming plays a huge part in our holy stories found in the Scriptures. From Abraham to Jacob, from Joseph to Daniel. Nearly all of the prophets were dreamers, and then you had angels coming to Joseph, to Mary in dreams. Dreaming in Scripture usually indicated that God was planning something big for God’s people.

So in our Scriptures this 3rd Sunday of Advent, we are treated to dreams, in the Psalm 126, in Isaiah 61 and in a special way in our tale of John the Baptist.  
Listen first to Psalm 126 :

It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,  
**when God returned Zion's exiles.**  
We laughed, we sang,  
**we couldn't believe our good fortune.**  
We were the talk of the nations -  
**"God was wonderful to them!"**  
God was wonderful to us;  
**we are one happy people.**  
And now, God, do it again,  
**bring rains to our drought-stricken lives.**  
So those who planted their crops in despair  
**will shout hurrahs at the harvest,**  
So those who went off with heavy hearts  
**will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.**

Now I'm sure that the returning exiles from Babylon did not do it easy. They returned to a devastated promised land. But their dreams gave them hope - their dreams were what fuelled their determination to begin again. And most importantly of all their dreams involve a God that had proved faithful time and time again. They dreamed of a God who loved them and cared for them - and so that God became a reality in their living.

And then there was Isaiah. What a dreamer! The spirit of the Lord was always coming on him! And what dreams! Dreams that Jesus obviously shared, because in his first sermon in the synagogue in Capernaum he chooses to dream of the Day of Lord. A day when the oppressed are given good news, the broken hearted healed, the bereft comforted, and those enslaved in so many ways, set free. It was the dream John the Baptist carried into the wilderness, and one that he shared with the crowds that flocked to see him by the Jordan. But his dreaming led him to point away from self - directed him to the turning point of time, God with us - the Incarnation, the true Christmas dream.

And with the coming of the Christ child, with his living, dying and rising, the dream has gained strength as millions of followers choose to live the dream of a new beginning, a coming together with God and God's creation. A dream that goes beyond petty religion, to encompass the whole of God's creation.

But Advent dreamers are not confined to the pages of Scripture. Martin Luther King had a dream that swept through imperial America just as powerfully as it did through imperial Rome with the dreamers of the early church. Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu shared the same dream for their country South Africa. It's the dream that so many of our young people have for a just world. It's the same dream that gathered so many people here yesterday to pack baskets to be given away freely, a reflection of God's love for us all. It's the dream that brings us to baptise little Archie, Matilda and Clancy, just as John baptised Jesus in the Jordan. And I hope it is the dream that brings all of you here to worship and sends you out to minister in the world.

Advent is a time for dreaming. A time for recovering ancient, long forgotten dreams. A time to expect, anticipate, we rejoice in the day when the wrongs will be righted, the

righteous will be vindicated, the weak will be made strong, the justice of God will prevail and be revealed to all people.

As we dream of a world made right by love, we might just begin to walk and live in the reality of that love in the ways we speak, act and live toward our fellow humans.

So let me conclude with a remarkable story I found on a website of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, called "Catherine's Cafe." It demonstrates the power of dreaming, even in the face of great suffering. And as usual, it is a little child that leads us into the dream. Seventy years ago Pearl Harbour was bombed by the Japanese in an act of unprovoked aggression. A few weeks later a remarkable event in Sr. Bernadelle Sheehan's Christmas crèche occurred. Under her guidance, the class drew a great mural of the nativity as it would have looked had it occurred in Japan, with Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus all distinctively bearing Japanese features and the shepherds likewise. Here in vivid technicolour we see the Advent dream of the universality of God's love.

And it's the dream that leads us into a new song today, a song called the "Oh The Life of the World." For me singing is a form of dreaming.  
Let me share with you the words of one of the verses.

**Oh the life of the world is the source of our healing.  
It rises in laughter and wells up in song:  
it springs from the care of the poor and the broken  
and refreshes where justice is strong.**

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