

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
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“You may say I'm a dreamer but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us and the world will live as one.”

These words are from one of the many songs that were played on radio stations, daily, as our country reeled from the terrorist attacks on September 11, fifteen years ago.

The words “You may say I'm a dreamer” come from John Lennon's song, “Imagine” - a song of hope for a troubled world, a song that hopes for peace.

Listen to some more of Lennon's hopeful words:

“Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do.
Nothing to kill or die for,
No religion too.
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace.

You may say that I'm a dreamer but I'm not the only one. I hope some day you'll join us and the world will live as one.”

I have had people tell me that I am a dreamer because I am opposed to any violent response to the violent acts of terrorists. Well, maybe I am a dreamer, but I am finding out, more and more, that I am not the only one. And I pray, daily, that more and more and more of us will turn to non-violent, peaceful solutions. Turning to non-violent, peaceful solutions is not the same thing as doing nothing. Instead, it suggests using our vast resources to find another way.

I know how difficult it is to consider non-violent responses when we are faced with such dreadful enemies. I read the newspapers, I look at the television coverage as we live another day of remembrance, I am shocked by the horrific actions of ISIS, of the Orlando shooter, the terrorists in Europe. I consider the thousands of people who hate and despise me just because I live in the United States and I find it all terrifying. And sometimes I think that we should send our armies in to bomb away my fear, to bomb away our fear, to stop our enemies.

There are even times, if I am honest with myself, that I find it hard to fight my own urge to respond violently myself when someone causes me a personal injustice, when someone threatens me personally. And, then, if I consider the welfare of my children, my loved ones, it is even harder to fight my own desire for a violent response. I know how difficult it is to turn away from violent responses.

And then we hear today's Gospel, a Gospel that tells us that our God hangs out with those who most frighten us, that God hangs out with those who want to destroy us. We hear this Gospel that says that God will leave all of the good Christians so that God can hang out with those who hate us.

OK - I can see the looks of confusion on your faces. Where in today's Gospel do we hear of God hanging out with people who want to hurt us, hanging out with violent people, with terrorists?

Today's Gospel consists of two parables. In the first parable one sheep is lost and so the shepherd leaves 99 sheep and goes off to find the one who is lost. In the second parable a woman has lost one coin and she searches until she finds it. Sounds pretty straightforward. If any of us is lost, God will always find us. True. But pay attention to who Jesus is talking to. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and the scribes, the ones who believed that they were not lost, the ones who thought they were part of the 99. Through the hyperbole in these parables Jesus is saying that yes, God goes to find those who are lost AND, by the way, everyone is lost, even the Pharisees and the scribes. And the way we know this is because Jesus said that the shepherd left 99 sheep unattended to find one that was lost. Really? I can't imagine any shepherd leaving 99 sheep unattended and at risk of attack by wolves, coyotes, or even other shepherds.

According to Robert Farrar Capon in his presentation on “30 Good Minutes,” the shepherd is willing to go out of the shepherding business altogether if he has to in order to save one lost sheep. Capon is saying that the 99 sheep, well that is really a set up, they don’t exist because there really is not one Pharisee, not one scribe, and not one of us who is not in need of being found by God. And the woman with the lost coin, she does not put it back into safekeeping. Instead, in her joy in finding what was lost, she throws a party and maybe even spends that coin in doing so. These two parables describe a God who goes after the lost, a God who will, or as Capon states, a God who needs to find. That is good news for each of us for those times when we are lost, and there are times that each and every one of us is lost. The good news of this Gospel also means, however, that God is going out to find those terrorists, those killers, those who most frighten us for they are surely lost. And God is not going out to get them to kill them. Nope. God is going out to find them so that God can bring them home, so that God can rejoice in what was lost being found.

Many years ago Verna Dozier wrote a book entitled “The Dream of God.” In this book Dozier states that the dream of God is one that has “the people of God . . . called to a possibility other than the kingdoms of the world.” (The Dream of God, Verna J. Dozier, p. 150) The people of God are called to a possibility that tells us to overcome evil with good. The people of God are called to live this crazy, wonderful dream of God – this dream that says that we will be a people who love, a people who love even our enemies. The people of God are called to live this dream of God that tells us to bless our persecutors, to feed and to offer drink to our enemies. The dream of God does not include violence.

It is a good and wonderful thing that as our country remembers and honors those who lost their lives on 9/11 and as our country often debates more war, as we each discern our own violent reactions and responses, it is a good and wonderful thing to remember the Dream of God. If we do so, maybe we can open ourselves to ways of thinking, ways of dreaming that will give us the answers to how as a people we can fight the threats of terrorism with love.

You may say that we are dreamers. As Christians we are each called by Jesus to love, we are called to follow God’s dream of love. As Christians we are called to be dreamers, dreamers who believe that another way is possible, dreamers who realize that our God wants to find all who are lost.

As Christians we are called to imagine a world where all the people live together in peace.

Let us all then be dreamers filled with hope, and, most importantly, as we dream let us get down on our knees in prayer. We might start our prayer with the words made familiar in another piece of music, words found in hymn #593.

“Lord, make us servants of your peace: where there is hate, may we sow love; where there is hurt, may we forgive; where there is strife, may we make one. Where all is doubt, may we sow faith; where all is gloom, may we sow hope; where all is night, may we sow light; where all is tears, may we sow joy. . .

Lord, make us servants of your peace.”

Lord, help us all to be dreamers for we are not the only ones. Maybe one day, all the world will live as one.