

Major Beverly Ivany:

On August 28th, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Marched on Washington where thousands had gathered to give his, what has now become known as his, I Have a Dream speech. His dream was for equality for all people, justice, that all oppression and prejudice would cease. He advocated for the freedom of all people, no matter their age, gender, or their social status or race. He went on to say, "I have a dream. I have a dream that one day my four little children will be judged, not for the color of their skin, but for the content of their character." He had a dream for his nation. He had a dream for the whole world, yet tragically he was assassinated because of it.

Perhaps it's time for all of us to begin dreaming again, dreaming for a better world in which to live. I dream of course, that this pandemic will soon be over. It's our corporate dream, no question. Many people say they dream that we will soon get back to normal, but is that really our dream? In some ways, yes it is. But in other ways, we have learned so much over these past weeks and months, I believe we have learned how we can put our dreams perhaps into perspective. I dream, we all dream that the suffering and death from COVID-19 will end, that doctors and nurses and frontline workers will get rest and be rejuvenated and revitalized. That isolation will somehow turn into interaction in a more positive and meaningful way. And that our love for God will deepen in a more profound way than ever before.

Dr. King makes reference in his speech to Isaiah chapter 40, which begins, "Comfort, comfort my people," says our God. God longs to bring to all those who are still experiencing sickness or have lost loved ones his great comfort, his arms of love to surround them with his tenderness. And for those of us who are still healthy and well, to be Jesus to others, to bring comfort and care and compassion where needed. "I have a dream," Dr. King says, still referencing Isaiah chapter 40 verse four, "That one day every valley shall be exalted so that we become more keenly aware of our environment. More keenly aware of the creation God made for each of us."

And he goes on to say, "That the rough places be made plain and the crooked places be made straight." In other words, to become fully aware that God will journey with us through the rough times of life and that the crooked places will in time with God's strength be made straight and right and good. Yes, I dreamed that coming out of this pandemic, whatever that looks like, we will be a better people. Isn't this your dream as well, that we will be a people who trust God implicitly, and that we will love him better every day. That we will realize and experience his amazing love for us, desiring that this love will permeate all we say and all we do in his name.

I dream that we will be a people who care for one another better than ever before and on a deeper level for then, as Dr. King says, the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh, all people will see it together. Yes, this is our hope. This is our faith. I believe this is our united glorious magnificent dream.

Major David Ivany:

The children of Israel were not unfamiliar with hardship, deferred hope, and we learn from their journey, their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, their prayers of [inaudible 00:04:35]. Out of the depths we cry to you oh Lord. Out of the depths, we cry out to the Lord. Hear my cry for mercy. And so we cry for mercy, those grieving, those exhausted, those confused. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits for the Lord. And we wait, we wait like a nightwatchman waiting for the dawn. Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa after having spent 27 years in prison, his presidency marked the end of apartheid, the culmination of a long road to freedom, a dream realized.

William Wilberforce, British parliamentarian and Christian fought tirelessly for the abolition of slavery. A 46 year journey fueled and sustained by a vision. All the world is waiting. We Christians are

waiting between Easter and Pentecost. We think of Peter, Jesus said of Peter, "Peter, on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Peter who enacts to that Pentecostal sermon quoted Joel's prophecy, God's spirit would be poured out on all men, women, slaves, free, old men would dream dreams, young men would have visions. Peter who in Acts 10 had this vision eating non-kosher food, which meant that the gospel would be not just for Jews, but for Gentiles, the whole world.

The same Peter, the one who said he would never deny had gone fishing that in between time. Then we have that beautiful story, one of my favorites of Jesus feeding his disciples, breakfast on the beach, a markedly different meal than the one they had shared in the upper room. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" And three times Peter says yes, and Jesus reinstates him, commissions him to service. Good things take time. Eugene Peterson talks to the long obedience in the same direction. Someone has said that life is a marathon, not a sprint. And so what's sustaining us in this marathon, this isolation, this stripping down to essentials? What are we learning, are we listening?

For Mandela, Wilberforce, it was a vision, a hope, a faith that what they did not see would become a reality even if it took time. Our present circumstances, loss of control, dashed expectations, strained relations, legitimate concern for the future can absorb us. The story of the men on the road to Emmaus comes to mind. We need to be listening. For Peter, it was affirming his love for Jesus and Jesus commissioning him. Are we discouraged, disillusioned? May we dare to dream, dare to hope, dare to hold on to a vision splendid. God is building his church. Men, women, PSW, CEOs, young, old, we are his arms and feet. Jesus says to Peter, Jesus says to us, "Do you love me? Go and serve and be."

Peter could not have imagined what the future held for him as he sat on the beach that day, many of us are having difficulty imagining what the future will be for us. So this morning we affirm our love of Jesus and we commit to him in service. We continue to dream of a day. Oh Israel, put your hope in the Lord. He himself will redeem Israel. Old Canada and Bermuda territory, put your hope in the Lord. We dream of a day.