

READING and SERMON FOR 1/15/17 WORSHIP SERVICE:

Manifesting the Dream

The Reverend Cynthia A. Frado

INTRODUCTION TO THE READING

I'd like to introduce our reading this morning with a little bit of background information which is important for you to know. A few of the characters will be familiar, and some might not be familiar at all. First, there is a lawyer, a priest, and a man in distress...and no, they did not walk into a bar.

Then there is a Levite. The Levites were the most educated of the tribes of Israel and they were the privileged elite who worked in the temple. There is also a Samaritan in our story today, and the Samaritans were considered to be a pagan sect of half-Jews who claimed to be the descendants of northern Israel tribes who had intermarried with people from the tribes beyond Israel, and hence had assimilated some of their cultural traditions and customs, thus making the Samaritans the undesirable mutts of Jewish society. Needless to say, there were many among the pure tribes who wished they didn't exist.

And, of course, there is Jesus.

Luke 10:25-37 English Standard Version (ESV)

This is the Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** Jesus said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" **27** And the lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." **28** And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

29 But the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **30** Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw the man lying there he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where the suffering man was lying in the gutter, and when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and

brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** And the next day he took out two denarii[a] and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ **36** Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” Jesus asked. **37** The lawyer said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

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UU Society of Amherst, MA

1/15/17

There are many dreams that we forget at dawn’s early light, and then there are some dreams that call to us from the shadows of our waking slumber and they don’t let us go. They burn thru the fog of illusion which is the reality in which we walk...the illusion that we are not good enough, the illusion that we are not the right color, not the right sexual orientation, not perfect enough in body or mind, not principled enough to make our own reproductive choices...the illusion that we are not the right religion, not from the right country, not entitled to equal justice or health care, not worthy to exist.

But the dreams...the dreams, they come anyway, their genesis deriving from a deep place in the collective unconscious of the human soul that transcends gender, race, creed, or culture. They come from the ancestors and they come from those yet unborn. They come from that eternal Spirit that has breathed us all into being.

These dreams are heard in every language and arise like a distant memory that is at once familiar and at the same time like a haunting echo that we cannot quite grasp. And they say to us: *You are good enough.* You are worthy of dignity. You are worthy of respect. You are worthy of finding healing in the broken places. You are worthy of basic human rights. You are worthy of equal justice. You are worthy of love. Your life matters.

And when these dreams that you have and that I have find each other, they merge into one great awakening where we are finally able to see ourselves in each other, and that as a human family we are ALL good enough, all worthy of dignity, respect, justice and love. Only when that veil of illusion that proclaims our undeserved, unequal worthiness is lifted, when the reality in which we walk reflects that greatest of truths that we are one and the same, can we truly make

manifest the inherent dream of our collective birthright, that we might all fulfill our greatest potential as human beings.

Given the fact that this is Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, and given the fact that he was a mighty *Guardian of the Dream* during his time on earth, I turned to some of his writings for inspiration for my message this morning. It was a powerful journey into my memory of his gift as a pastor, an orator and a leader. He was a man who stood upon the foundational teachings of his faith, and he reminded the world that **from generation to generation we must rededicate ourselves to those moral values and spiritual truths that call to our higher natures**, if we are to live the dream of all human equality.

I was particularly moved by an observation that Dr. King made while pondering the story of the Good Samaritan. The simplicity and juxtaposition of his words caused me to pause. Given this new era upon which we are about to embark upon, I thought it was particularly poignant for our communal contemplation this morning.

He said: [In regards to the story of the Good Samaritan,] *the first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'*

Therein lies the crux of the conundrum in which we find ourselves now.

As we stand upon the threshold of a new world order that has already inspired fear of “the other,” that has already promised to unravel decades of efforts to bring all people into a full communion of equality and fairness, that has embraced, affirmed, and empowered incivility, that has summarily dismissed truthfulness to power, that seeks to silence voices of reason and compassion, that denies the consequences of global warming, and which is determined to overturn hard-won legislation on basic human rights and which will undoubtedly leave some of our most vulnerable citizens without adequate health care...as we stand on the precipice of this unprecedented moment in American history, there are really only two possible choices that we must consider:

Either we can remain silent, withdraw into self-preservation mode and watch as large swaths of our human family are abused, ignored, and rejected while we ask ourselves, what will happen to me if I take this risk to get involved? OR, we can choose to be vigilant and expansive in our efforts to help those who need our strength and courage to help defend their right to exist in dignity, respect, justice,

and love, while we ask ourselves, if I do not stop to help those whose rights are being denied, what will happen to them?

You see, it is that dream...that haunting, persistent dream that arises in the darkest nights of our souls...that dream that will not let go of us. It is that dream which **burns** thru the fog of illusion which is the reality in which we walk...the illusion that we are not good enough, the illusion that we are not the right color, not the right sexual orientation, not perfect enough in body or mind, not principled enough to make our own reproductive choices...the illusion that we are not the right religion, not from the right country, not entitled to equal justice or health care, not worthy to exist.

But the dream tells us differently. And when these dreams that you have and that I have find each other, they merge into one great awakening where we are finally able to see ourselves in each other, and recognize that as a human family we are ALL good enough, all worthy of dignity, respect, justice and love...all worthy of finding healing in the broken places of our lives. **Only** when that veil of illusion that says we are undeserving and unworthy is *lifted*, when the reality in which we walk reflects that greatest of truths that we are one and the same, ONLY THEN can we truly make manifest the inherent dream of our collective birthright, that we might all fulfill our greatest potential as human beings.

The challenges set before us are daunting, make no mistake. But **we** are the *Guardians of the Dream*, now, and our perseverance, courage, and truth are calling to us from a deep and holy place. When we choose to bring that transformative power into the light of day, only then can we ask ourselves the third and final question that the story of the Good Samaritan inspires: *If I do not help those whose rights are being denied, what will happen to all of us?*

Amen, Blessed Be, and Namaste