**THE THREE DREAMS OF JOSEPH**

This past weekend, Sarah asked me two questions about Joseph. How old was Joseph when he married Mary, and Where was Joseph from? In truth, no one knows the precise answer to these questions of things that occurred in the ancient world. All we can do is speculate and guess. BUT, from our gospel passage today, we CAN learn some things about Joseph.

1. He listens to his dreams
2. He is obedient to God
3. He loves his family and he is a protective father.

I know that all of us have had dreams. Most of the time when we are sleeping, but sometimes even when our eyes our open. Dreams and Visions have been a principal mode of communication between God and God’s people. It seems, however, as we move further and further into the high-tech world of the 21st century, that we move farther and farther away from the realities that can occur in crazy things like dreams and visions.

In a couple weeks we as a nation will take pause to celebrate one of America’s greatest dreamers, Martin Luther King. Back in 1963, as Dr. King stood before a quarter million people in Washington, D.C., the great gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson, sat near him on the stage. She could feel his uncertainty. She felt him wandering from his message. And, she exhorts him: “Tell ‘em the dream, Martin. Tell ‘em the dream.”

And, Dr. King launches into the famous words: “I HAVE A DREAM THAT ONE DAY, ALL OF GOD’S CHILDREN, BLACKS AND WHITES, JEWS AND GENTILES, WILL ONE DAY HOLD HANDS AND SING THE WORDS OF THE OLD NEGRO SPIRITUAL, “FREE AT LAST, FREE AT LAST, THANK GOD ALMIGHTY I AM FREE AT LAST.”

WHOA, THAT’S A DREAM

ANOTHER DREAMER WAS DESMOND TUTU, WHO RECENTLY PASSED AWAY, GOD BLESS HIS SOUL. WE COULD SIT HERE ALL DAY AND TALK ABOUT DESMOND TUTU. HIS COURAGE, HIS HUMOR, HIS STAMINA IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE, BUT HE HAD A DREAM SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO DR. KING’S. IT WAS A DREAM IN WHICH CHILDREN OF ALL BACKGROUNDS, RACES, IDENTITIES, CREEDS AND FAITHS COULD JOIN HANDS IN A COMMON COMMUNITY OF LOVE, BUT IT WAS ALSO A DREAM IN WHICH WRONGDOERS CONFESSED, IN WHICH VICTIMS FORGAVE, AND THE SOUL OF A NATION HAD A CHANCE TO UNSHACKLE ITSELF FROM THE CHAINS OF APARTHEID. THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMITTEEE STARTED BY TUTU AND OTHERS CAME FROM A DREAM, I QUOTE ARCHBISHOP TUTU:

“ONCE THE WRONGDOER HAS CONFESSED AND THE VICTIM HAS BEEN FORGIVIN, IT DOES NOT MEAN THE END OF THIS DREAM FOR JUSTICE. NO, HE GOES ON, MOST FREQUENTLY, THE WRONG HAS AFFECTED THE VICTIMS IN TANGIBLE, MATERIAL WAYS. APARTHEID PROVIDED A SOUTH AFRICAN MINORITY WITH ENOROMOUS BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES, LEAVING ITS VICTIMS DEPRIVED AND EXPLOITED. IF SOMEONE STEALS MY PEN AND THEN ASKS FOR MY FORGIVENESS, UNLESS HE RETURNS MY PEN THE SINCERITY OF THE CONTRITION AND CONFESSION ARE DISINGENUOUS AND CONSIDERED NIL. CONFESSION, FORGIVENESS **AND REPARATION**, WHENEVER FEASIBLE ARE PART OF THE CONTINUUM OF THIS DREAM OF JUSTICE.”

ANOTHER DREAMER WAS THE GREAT THEOLOGIAN AND MYSTIC HOWARD THURMAN WHO FOUNDED A CHURCH CALLED THE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, BASED ON **HIS DREAM** OF A RACIALLY-UNIFIED CONGREGATION BUILT ON INTERRACIAL, INTERCULTURAL, INTERRELIGIOUS UNITY. HIS BOOK ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH IS ENTITLED: **FOOTPRINT OF A DREAM**. THROUGHOUT THE LATER YEARS OF HIS LIFE, THURMAN POSED THE DIFFICULT QUESTION TIME AND AGAIN: “WHEN YOU DIE WHICH OF YOUR DREAMS WILL DIE WITH YOU?” THAT IS A SOBERING QUESTION. DREAMS, THURMAN SAID, ARE THE BEARERS OF NEW POSSIBILITIES. THINK ABOUT THAT. AGAIN. DREAMS ARE THE BEARERS OF NEW POSSIBILITIES.

THE LAST OF MY DREAMERS TODAY IS A PERSON I SPEAK OF OFTEN: HARRIETTE TUBMAN. SHE TOO WAS A PERSON WHO RECEIVED DREAMS, LISTENED TO DREAMS AND –FOR HER VERY SURVIVAL--FOLLOWED HER DREAMS. ONE OF THE MOST INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE IN AMERICAN HISTORY, HARRIET TUBMAN WAS SMALL IN STATURE, BUT LARGE IN HER FAITH IN GOD. LIKE MOST SLAVES, SHE WAS ABUSED, SEPARATED FROM HER FAMILY, WITH NO REAL FUTURE BEYOND SERVING HER MASTER. HOWEVER, HER DREAMS OF FREEDOM WERE GREATER THAN THE CONDITIONS THAT BOUND HER IN SLAVERY. IN HER ACCOUNTS, HARRIETT TOLD OF THOSE TIMES WHEN GOD GAVE HER A DREAM THAT SAID: “GO NOW, HARRIETT, GO!! GET UP AND GO!” AND SHE NEVER LOST A PASSENGER ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. ABOUT DREAMS, HARRIET SAID “EVERY GREAT DREAM BEGINS WITH A DREAMER, ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH, THE PATIENCE, AND THE PASSION TO REACH FOR THE STARS AND CHANGE THE WORLD.

THAT BRINGS US BACK TO JOSEPH AND HIS THREE DREAMS. THE FIRST DREAM --- GET OUT OF HARM’S WAY, JOSEPH, GO TO SAFETY. THE SECOND DREAM – GO HOME JOSEPH. THE TYRANT IS DEAD. GO HOME. THE THIRD DREAM – JUDEA ISN’T YOUR HOME ANYMORE. GO TO NAZARETH IN GALILEE.

LIKE THE EXAMPLES ABOVE, JOSEPH IS INSPIRED TO ACT, HE HAS THE CONFIDENCE AND FAITH TO ACT, AND HE HAD THE WHEREWITHAL TO DO WHAT WAS INSTRUCTED…..AGAIN, THE INSPIRATION, THE CONFIDENCE, AND THE MEANS…..IN THESE ATTRIBUTES JOSEPH IS THE SAME AS MARTIN, DESMOND, HOWARD AND HARRIET.

AND, AS WE AS ST. DAVID’S LOOK AHEAD, IT IS MY PRAYER THAT GOD CONTINUES TO GIVE US DREAMS, BUT NOT ONLY THAT, BUT ALSO THE INSPIRATION FROM GOD, THE CONFIDENCE IN GOD AND THE MEANS FROM GOD…MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS US WITH DREAMS. AMEN