

We'll have to talk about this tomorrow

THE GREAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 24:36-44

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IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Do you dream

Do you ever dream about the future? The Bible encourages us to dream. For thousands of years women and men have read the Bible and dreamed of God's wonderful future for this world. The prophet Isaiah lived over 700 years before the birth of Jesus but he dreamed of the day when God would come and live in a house right here on earth. ~~Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets never dreamed that the Messiah would lead us out of this world, they hoped for Him to come to this world and straighten it out.~~ ~~Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets never dreamed that the Messiah would lead us out of this world, they hoped for Him to come to this world and straighten it out.~~ ~~Isaiah dreamed about a future when all nations would be united in their desire to know, love and obey God. "Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'" He dreamed of the day all conflicts would be resolved, all weapons made into garden tools, and humankind would study war no more.~~

It's hard to believe

It's hard to believe Isaiah's dream will come true. We live in the valley of the shadow of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The war in Afghanistan and the threat of biological warfare give us nightmares, not dreams of international peace. In the world as it is today, the last word is conflict, war and death. But I dream of a future where the last word is not conflict but reconciliation; not war but peace, not death but life. ^{God's people have never suddenly} Through prophets like Isaiah God also gives ^{us} dreams of God's future for this world. ^{let that none die} Isaiah gives us the ability to see the world not as it is, but as it might be, as it should be, as it will be. ^{shows us The}

But what if by true parents

Isaiah's dream might enable parents to see their children with new eyes. If nations will be reconciled, maybe there's hope for parents and children too. Parents, when your children bring home a less than stellar report card, when they get in trouble at school, when you lose patience

if this is true then this can not be true but this is true - that's what I believe

with them, try to see them, not as they are in the present, but as God's children destined for success. Lewis Smedes writes, "When I recall my mistakes as a parent of three children, I repent for the times I was so blinded by the goofing off I saw on the surface that I lost my insight into the potential at the depths. And I repent even more for the times when I discouraged them from imagining fantastic things for themselves. Why did I discourage my son from imagining himself as the first baseman for the Los Angeles Dodgers? Why did I discourage my daughter from imagining herself as the lead singer with Fleetwood Mac?" He goes on to say, "...to puncture a child's dream even before she gets a chance to believe in it is a sin." God's promise enables us to believe that every child is a child of hope whom God has destined for success.

When we dream that *the world* and our families can be different from the way they are God calls us to be heralds of His kingdom. He encourages us to resist this present darkness of bickering, conflict, and spiraling violence. Isaiah's dream of the future helps us change the future. Imagine what would happen if we began to nurture our children with Biblical dreams?

Imagine a world where Red and Yellow, Black and White are recognized by one another as being precious in God's sight. Imagine a world where we prepared our children for the day "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." William Sloan Coffin has said, "We have learned to soar through the air like birds, to swim through the seas like fish, to soar through space like comets. Now it is high time we learned to walk the earth as the children of our God."

That's the key to the fulfillment of the dream's promise - walking the earth as the children of God. Isaiah suggests that his dream for the future will be realized in history as we walk in the light of the Lord. "Come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!", he says. Live what we profess! Hold fast to Isaiah's dream and walk in the light of the Lord. Fix that distant dream in our eye and walk towards it like a farmer fixes his eye on a distant tree and plows a straight furrow.

What if it
was really
internationally

walking in
the light

Nelson Mandela fixed his eye on the promise of Isaiah dream. He waited in prison for 27 years before his dream for a new South Africa was achieved. As the day for his release drew near, his only daughter was allowed to come see him. She carried with her the grandchild Mandela had never seen. She'd waited to name the child until her grandfather could give her a name. Mandela named her *Zaziwe*, an African word for hope. He called her *Hope*, he said, because "during all my years in prison hope never left me."

Whenever I see alienated ethnic groups reconciled I see a sign of the time God arbitrates for many peoples. On the night before Yom Kippur, in 1997, an eight-year old Israeli boy was run over and killed by a car in the city of Tel Aviv. On the same night, at the same hospital, a little Palestinian girl was dying of heart disease. The parents of the little Jewish boy offered their son's still beating heart to any child who needed it until they realized the child who needed it was a Palestinian. The parents managed to put aside their hatred and prejudice and give their boy's heart to the little Palestinian girl. After the surgery, the Jewish mother and the Palestinian mother embraced each other, sharing tears of joy and grief, as the heart of a Jewish boy beat inside a Palestinian girl's breast. I see that as a sign that Isaiah's dream will one day be fully realized. But I see signs in far less dramatic ways. Every time bickering friends become reconciled, I see a sign of the day when every alienated person will be reconciled.

I see ^{another} ~~one more~~ sign of the fulfillment of Isaiah's dream; the cross. Bread and wine on the Communion table are signs that God intends to save, not destroy, this world. The cross is a sign that the Maker of the universe chose to die - in order to save the world from its own self destruction. Christ died, ^{but he lives} but he is present in the Bread and Wine. Death did not have the final word. His resurrection and presence are signs that God is committed to the fulfillment of Isaiah's dream.

The people of Lithuania know the cross is a sign of God's future victory because they've lived it. Before the Russians came to Lithuania in 1940 you would have seen a hill outside a

little village called The Hill of Crosses. It's a mound of earth about thirty feet high and covered with homemade crosses. High iron crosses. Wooden crosses. Concrete crosses. The hill was covered with crosses. You could hardly see the ground because of the crosses. Each cross represented a loved one who had died as a stranger in exile or in a Russian prison. The Hill of Crosses had been sacred to the villagers for a hundred years. It was a mystic place, a holy place where villagers gathered almost every day to pray and remember.

In 1940 the Russians came. The Soviet Army saw the crosses as relicts of superstition and an insult to their atheism. So they made a law against cross planting. Little good it did. The villagers sneaked in at night and planted their crosses anyway. The Russians rolled in their bulldozers. They burned the wooden crosses. They broke the cement crosses into little small pieces. They melted the iron crosses. But the villagers still came night after night to plant their crosses.

In 1988 the Russians finally gave up. Now the crosses have taken on a new meaning. People gather at the Hill of Crosses now and remember how the mighty Soviet Army mustered their machines against their crosses and how the crosses beat them back. Each cross planted during the time of occupation when it was forbidden to plant them has become a reminder that more things are possible than they had dared dream of then.

ISAIAH'S DREAM VISION enables us to believe more things are possible than we can imagine
In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and ... He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.