

Dreamworks

January 3, 2016

Welcome back to the Christmas story! We have moved from our sanctuary but we are singing the same beautiful carols. We are searching for a certain gift we may have missed between the “Noel’s” --- the time has come this day, 9 days (more or less) after the shepherds and angels sang of “Joy to the World”. Even the Wise Men have set off on their return visit (by a different route of course). Still we stop together and listen once more to the rest of Matthew’s Christmas story. We wonder does the gospel writer have a “take away” message for us to bring home and treasure in our hearts. Do we hear it!

Many, many years ago, on Christmas days when our family was very young, we would make the journey back home to Massachusetts. We traveled from houses in Michigan, Missouri or New Jersey to join our parents and grandparents. My father, Charlie McNally, Pastor Laura’s grandpa, would fill us up with stories. He called them classics. My mother Maureen, Nanie to the children would fill us up with turkey and goodies. Like the famous Irish poet SHAMUS HEANEY, my father understood “words” as the bearers of history-mystery. Each year his stories would be told again so we could understand a world that had gone by, but also we could find some nugget of inspiration! Some of the stories told: of dreams, we could share and hold precious. In a way, the classic stories were like miracle stories, filled with laughter and puzzles, dreams and hopes.

On this day, though, Matthew’s words draw for us a cloudy, murky, dark night scene filled with dreams and nightmares-angels. We listen to the search for safety.

Our 2000-year-old Christmas story is marked by woes, and worries, wailings, screams, blood and fears. As Jeremiah described it, Rachael, an ancient ancestor-in-faith, weeping for her children because they are no more! Hear the words of Jeremiah describing the harsh scene of Rachel. *A voice is heard in Ramah lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted because they are no more. And then we hear Jeremiah prophesy: Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears: There is a reward for your work...There is hope for your future. (Jer 31)* Soon enough we realize as did the Three Kings that the scoundrel Herod has chosen drastic action to trap Mary and

Joseph and kill Jesus. With the din of the senseless slaughter of young children, Joseph receives the frightening call to flee and find safety. The call is given by angels in the midst of a dream. Joseph heard the language of angels giving direction and assurances.

Even though, these are ancient stories Rachel's Jeremiahs as well as Matthew's Nativity stories. They are mirrored in the newspapers, the New York Times. We search for good news daily, and yet almost daily we find disasters.

We too, wept like Rachel and the women of Bethlehem when we heard and saw the drowned child, Alan of Syria, a two-year-old refugee, one among the millions of refugees and migrants who stumbled or drowned before entering into Europe. This year, half the population of Syria have fled. Over 100 more children besides Alan have drowned in the Mediterranean since his story was first told, a few months ago.

We may well be involved with our own challenges, crisis of health, family heart break, job loss, indecision, stark loneliness and grief. We know about fears and fearing. How about if we take the angel's message do not fear to heart. Let go of our numbness and choose now to look forward to the goodness and mystery of life. Join me this day, January 3, 2016 in trusting that we all are equipped for the future. Sure we need to do the work of dreaming, that is drop fear and walk boldly into tomorrow. The birth, life, of Jesus Christ. The flickering light we carry inside is the image of God, gift given to each of us. We can dare to shine our bright light on our neighbors, on our families, on strangers, on the wider world.

Now we know heartbreak and fear has wound around our future "angel-speak" and "Dream Works" give us hints to sustain our own good stories of tomorrow. Over and over, the angels of the Biblical world hold forth the words to lead us through tomorrow: DO NOT FEAR...and those words echoed in Bethlehem.

Looking back, the angels seemed to guide Joseph in making a very wise choice to settle into the Galilee Region of Israel and Palestine. Galilee is beautifully washed by the deep blue of the Sea of Galilee. The land is surrounded on one side, by the hills of Golan. Eventually the Galilee region became known as the Garden of Fruitfulness. It is indeed a safe and beautiful place where Jesus of Nazareth gave us grace and wisdom. It was

there in a tiny synagogue that Jesus preached: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. (ah! But that is another sermon!)

The big question we ask this: Where are we in Matthew's Nativity Scene. We hear the answer in the hymns that we sing "Christ is born for us today".

It is through working and listening pondering our own thoughts that we discover Isaiah's prophecy: A Little Child Will Lead them. A little child will lead us bringing the sparkling light of love and faithfulness, that little child will rest in our hearts, will guide our lives, will nurture and nourish us so we can do the hard work of bringing our God's dream for us.

God's dream is for the world, for our neighbors, for ourselves, as we follow the light of Christ. It is in the "night light" of the Nativity scene. Let us dream on, without fear dream of peace for the world, dream of safety for our children, dream of the laughter and friends, dream of the language of angels, dream often of the BOLD WORDS written large in Scripture (Isaiah) *Fear Not, for I have called you my own. I, Emmanuel are with you. Do not be afraid.*

Amen

Elaine McNally Fitzpatrick