

Genesis 18 1-15

Romans 5;1-8

Mathew 9:35-10:8

Mary Barnett

I had my children old. Not as old as Sarah maybe  
but old  
and...

I'd argue,  
just as miraculously.

I'll save that story for another day

For now, suffice it to say I know what it means to wait a long  
time for a dream deferred  
as the poet Langston Hughes wrote.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

So... what happens to a dream deferred?  
That is what we have seen rattling the self-quarantining cages of  
our country  
In this apocalyptic moment  
when the veil is being pulled back revealing  
what has been hidden from view.  
at least from some of us

Apocalyptic: That's the same word used to describe the time  
when Jesus lived and died and rose again  
another time when  
what had been hidden  
was revealed.

These revelations are happening NOW  
for many of us  
because we have less to distract us  
We've been home...a lot  
Some of us have lost jobs  
Lost school time:

The whole world over

It's unprecedented!

*Could you have imagined this back in February?*  
*grey headed movie stars*  
*Americans wearing facemasks?*  
*the come-back of drive-in movies?*

It would have seemed ridiculous...

and yet

here we are:

in a period of enforced meditation:

facing ourselves day after day

in the same mirror

in the same present moment

whether we want to or not

because there is simply nowhere else to go.

“Wherever you go there you are”:

the mindfulness scholar Jon Kabat Zinn wrote presciently 20  
years ago

and this is truer now than ever

wherever you go there you are:

from the sofa to the back porch and to the sofa again

In the company of the same people

Accompanied by the same problems

*maybe this is true  
for our country as well  
wherever we go there we are  
Racism is a part of our nation's history  
A history that we like to imagine we've overcome  
A history we thought we could leave behind  
and head out to dinner at a fine restaurant  
and focus on our very real accomplishments*

*but it turns out  
we can't fundamentally overcome racism in this country  
until we understand how it lingers fundamentally  
even though we wish it didn't  
Even though we are mostly good people  
Who stalwartly hope everyone will succeed  
even though **we wish we weren't seeing what we are seeing**  
And may even feel unconsciously **angry** at the people pointing  
out*

*But it's the truth  
People of color have been disproportionately affected by this  
pandemic  
in more ways than one.*

***What does that mean?***

So, ask yourself, what would you do if  
After years hard work  
it still feels like your safety and your children's safety and your  
ability to buy a house where the schools are good and you can  
make a good living has been looted?

what would you do?

Well if  
The African American men and women at the prayer rally I  
went to last weekend in Middletown were any example  
you continue to pray...with ferocity and joy

*I mean their faith was fierce*

*It dwarfed mine*

*The mayor and I were willing to work*

*but these men and women*

*they were willing to pray*

*with their whole souls and hearts and bodies on the line*

because it seemed to me that

*They knew*

*They knew in their bones*

That suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces  
character, and character produces hope, and hope does not  
disappoint us,

Because God's love *has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit*

which gives us the courage and the energy to keep trying even in the face of 2 centuries of NO!

so here we are stuck

trying to distract ourselves from being

unable to distract ourselves

Glancing at our phone umpteen million times a day

or maybe too discouraged and agitated to look at all

as we try

to figure that out:

**what is true?**

**Who to trust**

**What matters most?**

**Back in February ...remember...we thought truth, with a capital T was dead; right?**

**the news was fake**, everything was spin, every opinion was partisan, nothing was verifiable

it was like we were stuck in a trap we knew we had somehow *helped to build*

*and yet couldn't get out of*

The funny thing is

now we are *actually* stuck in a trap  
no longer figuratively but *ACTUALLY* trapped  
in isolation with ourselves  
and we see  
that even though  
we can't know it with 100% accuracy  
our life *depends on the truth*  
*On who we trust*  
*character matters*

Christ died for the ungodly  
we are called  
Not to be perfect  
Not to crawl on our knees through the desert repenting  
But...  
to let the soft animal part of our bodies love what it loves  
And vouchsafe that same safety for other people  
We are called to be vulnerable to the truth of what we DO see  
And let ourselves be changed by it  
And call it out  
even when it hurts  
especially when it hurts  
even when it shames us  
especially when it shames us  
even when it means admitting we were wrong or made a mistake

(especially when it means admitting we were wrong and have made a mistake)

Even when we have blamed someone else for a speck in their eye when in our eye is a piece of timber 10ft long

Because we have a savior who told us to not be afraid  
we can do hard things

when George Floyd was a teenager he wrote in his yearbook

I want to touch the world

That is akin to the longing I hear in Mary Oliver's poetry

I want to touch the world

I want to Lean down into the grass to look at a grasshopper.

Stare into the petals of a peony

glory in the wild pebbles of the rain.

We are born and have our allotted years to try and touch the world.

We received this without payment

Now we, all of us should be willing to give it without payment

George Floyd wrote in his yearbook

I want to touch the world

And 40 years later

after *surviving* covid 19

he died crying I can't breathe

When the Holy Spirit is snuffed out in a human being's eyes  
whether from years of economic deprivation or racism that has  
burrowed underground or homophobia or misogyny or because  
you crossed paths with a brutally violent policeman or an  
abusive wife or an addicted husband

This is wrong.

when that light is being snuffed out: whether individually or  
systematically

we as a church

as a community

as a society

we must speak up

and reimagine the world

More in line with the kingdom of God

**I had my children old.**

**Not as old as Sarah maybe**

**but old**

**and...**

**I'd argue,**

**just as miraculously.**

**I'll save that story for another day**

**For now, suffice it to say I know what it means to wait a  
long time for a dream deferred**

If you feed the light at the core of your being  
if you are open to hope and new ways of seeing  
And are willing to work your butt off  
and not be bitter in spite of what has happened to you

if you feed the light at the core of your being  
which is where you came from in the first place  
and let the soft animal part of your body love what it loves and  
need what it needs instead of turning hard and cold and bitter  
inside

you will find

that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces  
character, and character produces hope, and hope does not  
disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our  
hearts through the Holy Spirit and that stuff

man...

that stuff is powerful

It will lead us into truth

amen