

## **Bennochy church 19th November 2017**

*"I have a dream, that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*

*I have a dream today! I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."*

*With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.*

*And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:*

*Free at last! Free at last!*

*Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"*

*Probably one of the most famous speeches in the world. (Martin Luther King, 1963),*

We all dream of a world as we would like it to be. I wonder what is your dream for the world? The thing is, dreams are free, and there is always a cost in what we are prepared to do to fulfil our dreams. *"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."* a quote by Mahatma Gandhi. Change only happens, if we are prepared to act.

The great revelation of John, gives us hints and clues as to what is to come. Many have lived their lives obsessed with its meaning, and have tried in vain to see in its symbolism, the great events of history. But the thing is, visions are never nailed down in a world of facts, logic and rationale. If we only look at the words of John in this way, we will see nothing.

The temptation of such revelation is to live life only in the future and not in the present. Today becomes irrelevant, because faith is seen only in terms of eternal salvation. What is understood is promised, but still to come. It is the hoped for. It is that which is believed, yet still not seen. It is actually very difficult to live only in the present. So faith is lived in the tension between the glory of a future world restored and still to be revealed and, the reality of seeking first the kingdom of God, today. We are called

to live as spiritual 'in-betweeners'. We live between two worlds.

The people who first read the words of the revelation of John, lived in a world of Roman persecution. So here was an encouragement that the world to come would be far better than the one you are presently living in. So the context of such image and language was, you might live in a present hell, but there is glory to come.

The power of these images and the symbolism, is one of contrast. You cry today, but there will be no more tears. You grieve today, there will be no more death. You are in pain at the moment, the old things of this world will disappear, because God says, I will make all things new. That is the dream they held onto. God will indeed make a new heaven and a new earth.

We live in a very different world. But hell still exist. The violence experienced by the Rohingya Muslim women at the hands of Myanmar soldiers. I found it almost too difficult to listen to their experiences. Hell exists in the starving population of Yemen. Images of parents who wonder if their children will survive another day. As far as I'm concerned that is hell. In these kind of circumstances, all of us I think, would hold onto the vision of a new and better world to come.

In the midst of this vision, God says he is to be trusted, trusted because what is to happen, has already happened. That is the

essence of faith. To believe in what we hope for. It has not actually happened yet, and it does not mean with certainty that it will happen. Faith is about holding onto that which is ultimately unknown. There is no faith in that which is certain. There is only certainty in what we hope for.

God is to be trusted because he is not contained in our understanding of time. His reality lies outside of our past present and future. He alone can say, in advance, *it is done!* The words of Christ from the cross. He is the first, from the very beginning of time. He is the last, when time shall be no more, just eternity itself.

Get your head round that! Or better still, live for today. What did Jesus say, *tomorrow will have enough troubles of its own.* And occasionally, just occasionally, have a glimpse at the future. Bring your dreams to God, and then, get back to the reality of life.

May the God who stands before us, offer us hope.

May Jesus, who stands beside us, offer peace.

May the spirit who lives within, be our guide, in this world and the next. Amen.