

St Paul's Anglican Church Beaconsfield Western Australia

14 September 2014 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 14: 19-31

Psalm 114

Romans 14: 1-14

Matthew 18:21-35

[Proper 19A/Ordinary 24A/Pentecost +14 September 14, 2014](#) Text week

To explore more fully the insights within the Old Testament story of ‘the parting of the Red sea’ it is helpful to approach the narrative in the same way that we look with wonder and try and grasp meaning when we are awakened from sleep with some images from our dreams.

In that moment of awakening when the landscape of the dream is still there, albeit fading, we try and make sense of a seemingly nonsense world. And we can do the same with today’s first reading; in the twilight of awakening we grasp at whatever we remember in order to seek some sense and meaning from all that we experienced in the dream, or reading.

As a bible story, our first glimpse, or remembering is that this story has something do with life, the living word; the bible speaks to each and every life, a universal story from the dreamscape of eternity.

More specifically, the story is from the book of Exodus, a book that is all about the movement, the journey, into freedom; a journey that moves toward the dwelling place of God.

So already we can pause and wonder, and seek to make sense of what we have already remembered from the dream. What is the relevance of this, what can this dream, this story being telling me?

Maybe life itself is a dream of freedom, maybe our lives are the movement of Exodus; for surely if we only experience life as a span of existence between birth and death then we live no more nor less than a cabbage lives.

Psalm 32:9 during evening prayer this week says: “*9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding*”

Does the dream we have in the first reading give us an encounter with life’s truest journey?

Let’s explore further the details from the dream that we can remember.

The central image we recall is most likely the parting of the sea; and dreams do seem to have a way of providing striking images to us in order to engage our sense of wonder and to take us beyond the confines of our rational thought.

This image might also remind us of a previous dream, the dream of creation in Genesis. In the Genesis creation story, creation, life, is itself drawn out from the waters of chaos as they are divided and separated to provide for dry land and the emergence of life. Is the Exodus

story somehow linked to the same process, is the act of creation and the movement toward freedom, the journey back to the place of God all of the same order?

Is the dream of Exodus, like the dream of Genesis awakening us to a life orientation that is so much more than all we encounter in our daily lives?

As we look further into the details of the dream we discover the players who enact the dream, Moses, the army of Israel and the Egyptian army.

It is the hand of Moses that separates the waters; and even before that dramatic actions there is another separation; *“The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; ...It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night”*

The angel of God separates the two armies, the two mighty forces as a cloud a place of unseeing.

Do we know these dreamscape aspects in our daily lives are they just beyond our surface of our living, are aspects of our truest reality?

A part of us is the faith filled army of Israel that follows the Divine hand that separates the seas of chaos to offer a path forward.

A part of us chooses the journey forward seeking and striving for a return to the dwelling place of God.

And a part of us is the determined army of Egypt wanting to hold on to all that it has; afraid of losing what it already owns, determined to maintain the status-quo of enslavement.

If we stand in the dreams landscape on the banks of the Red sea we will see in the detail, beyond the sand filled shoreline of the sea, an even green landscape that takes the eye away from the sea, a field of cabbages stretching out for miles in every direction.

But we bring our attention back to the dream’s movement, and consider Moses; if we can identify ourselves with the armies of Israel and Egypt can we also identify Moses within ourselves?

A movement of his hand *“drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.”*

What movement does this identify for us, what creative activity of ours opens the chaos before us and makes clear a pathway to freedom?

The dream of Exodus is a life-dream, and it only holds insight for us if we can find ourselves in a similar landscape.

A primitive understanding of life sees death as an endpoint, and as a point of entry into another ‘life’, the hereafter. What we find in the dream of Exodus is an entry point into life’s eternal fullness that is on a continuum with today, and entry into eternity that is beyond the enslavement of death.

Again, we must look at the dream, we do not die on one shore of the sea and find ourselves resurrected on the other shore. In the Exodus dream of life we find our way to God's dwelling place with intention, by the movement of our hand, by a separation of chaos, and choosing an orientation aligned to one of life's mighty forces.

If we are waiting for death as a changing of the order of life we are but cabbages on the shores of the Red Sea.

If we seek life, we too must set our faces toward Jerusalem, lift our hands to separate the sea and discover that life that is not bounded by death.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.



Peter Humphris