

Reflection October 26th, 2025

'Dreaming New Dreams'

Last week we started talking about what aspirations you might have for peace and justice in the world. We were talking about Jeremiah's prophecy that God would make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah and the fact that he wasn't going to be living to see the end of the exile. This week we're moving on to hearing from Joel who came after the exile while the Israelites were still being led by the Elders and the Priests, interestingly he never mentions a king. However, he does include a strong message of the outpouring of God's Spirit, which promises to inspire dreams and visions among *all* people. Not dreaming about the same thing expecting a different outcome, but dreaming of new dreams, creating something new and vigorous. His words for today, not only reassures us of God's presence, but they also challenge us to explore how we discern the authenticity of these dreams and vision and how we can communicate them effectively to others.

To be rather extreme, if I were to tell you that through a dream, I heard God tell me to rob a bank because we needed the money, I'd expect you to say to me, 'Sharon, you've got to be kidding!'. 'That isn't a dream from God, but something else!' How can we know this dream doesn't come from God? We can be confident in knowing it wasn't from God because that isn't in God's character and definitely goes against God's law and purpose. The dreams that come from God would be full of the goodness of God, it would be one where hope and restoration is evident, love and compassion for others would be clearly seen. To discern if a dream is really from God, the importance that a committed level of prayer and reflection, where seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit has been an integral part of the dreaming journey, can't be understated. Our personal relationship with God plays a critical role in the discernment process. The dreams that resonate with God's word upholding the belief and value systems we find in the scriptures, that spur compassion, social justice, and a deeper love for others can typically be witnessed as being in the light of Christ. Further exploration of the scripture can also bring about a clearer picture of what the

dreaming involves. And as I said earlier, any dream or vision that contradicts the wisdom and teaching found in the scriptures should raise a red flag.

Joel reminds us of God's promise that God's Spirit will be poured out on all people – not just a select few, but all people. This pouring out will impart prophetic experiences among sons, daughters, old and young men and women. This inclusivity suggests that God's dreams and visions aren't restricted by societal norms such as age or gender. Therefore, discernment also lies in the heart of the community. Sharing the dreams and visions with others in our community of faith, asking for others to pray about our dreams and visions can help to validate what we hope we've heard and seen in our dreaming and visioning. This communal approach allows us to benefit from a diversity of thoughts and insights, ensuring that any dream holds weight in our community and isn't just a misinterpretation of personal wishes or social influences.

The Market @ The Meeting Place is such a dream and vision. It was a dream and vision first presented to John and I during the Joint Nominating Committee conversations early in 2022. It was first spoken of as an Op Shop, it has evolved into The Market @ The Meeting Place. It is a collective of all the good things St Ninian's does over the course of the year happening more often. Over the past 3 years it has been discussed, prayed about, and shared not only with this community, but also with SYNOD, Presbytery, and the wider community. I might add mostly with a great deal of enthusiasm and encouragement for its success. According to some we have been bold and clear about what our intentions are, others have wanted more information and are still questioning. At the very beginning we made sure that it was all about God's purpose to take the gospel into the community, Christ's hospitality and love for all to be known and felt by strangers and loved ones, the Spirit's guidance and wisdom to lead us on this journey of a new dream. This is a dream that involves not only our congregation but how we involve and encourage the members of our community to join us along the way. One of the ways we're involving the community is to follow the model of hospitality set by Jesus – over a meal or refreshments. Jesus came upon the two people who were walking to Emmaus when a discussion took

place. They didn't know who they were walking with until over a meal where bread was broken and shared that they became aware they were walking and sharing hospitality with Christ.

I see a similar thing here, we are talking and living amongst many different people who don't really know us, although they hear about us and probably amongst themselves discuss who they think we are, however, it isn't until we 'break bread together' that they see us for who we are -bold people of Christ willing to share what we know and what we have.

When the time came to share what we've been dreaming about, being bold and clear in that dreaming was an important step. In the same way as Peter speaks of his prophetic fulfillment in Acts 2 during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, our sharing should encourage action to take place and inspire faith in those who hear it. In sharing our dreams, it's incumbent upon us to be sensitive to how and when we share our dreams. Dreams born in God's spirit need to be shared in a way that invites others into the dreaming space where they can join in with the dreaming rather than the dreamer forcing their dream upon others. As usual the language we use can invite others into the conversational environment from where thoughtful and fruitful discussions take off.

When we begin to share our new dreams as night follows day the implications of it begin to take shape especially for communal faith and social actions. The dreams we receive are often challenging for us as they require us to reimagine our realities and act in accordance with God's purpose, as well as our belief and value systems. For example, if someone dreams of a way we can care for our environment in a more sustainable manner, they may feel compelled to share that vision in a way that pulls others into wanting to be part of the dream for a better environment, such as the Biodiversity Garden. The committee was then able to mobilize others to work out ways for it to happen, and because of their shared beliefs and values they have worked together and made it happen in a sustainable way. Sharing shouldn't simply end with the individual experience but should act as a catalyst for a new dream to come into fruition.

As we navigate this journey of dreaming new dreams and sharing them with others, it's important we constantly remain open to further revelation. There's no need to stop dreaming new dreams or even expanding the dream as evolution takes place. God's dreams and visions often come in stages, requiring patience and continuing conversations with God and the community. The act of dreaming and sharing doesn't end once the dream is articulated; rather, it opens the door for continued exploration and growth, revealing new layers of truth as we obediently follow the path laid out before us.

God's promise Joel reveals to us is one of encouragement to be expectant of God's working through their dreams and visions. By engaging in prayer, looking for God's wisdom and guidance, and staying attentive to God's Word, we can discern God's message effectively. With prayerful consideration, humility and sensitivity to the context in which we share these revelations, we can inspire and move others toward the realisation of God's dream for us, ultimately fulfilling God's promise in our lives and the communities we share.

Amen