



ALL SAINTS CHURCH

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

**“Let No One Deceive You”**

A sermon preached by the Rev. Susan Russell

April 26, 2009

There is a quote that I’ve heard variously attributed to Karl Barth, to Billy Graham and to Ed Bacon. And that quote is “A preacher should preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”

But what I wondered this week is if we don’t need to update that quote to reflect how we live and work and communicate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – update it to read: “preach with the Bible in one hand and “the newspaper AND “YouTube” in the other!”

Is your email inbox like mine? Does it seem that every third or fourth message lately is a link to something on YouTube that someone sends you labeled “must see” or “don’t miss”???? Well, that’s all well and good ... and I appreciate the generous impulse to share cute pet tricks and the latest political commercial parody ... but it’s been a busy couple of weeks around here and I had a SERMON to write and a Covenant One class to get ready for heaven’s sake ... I didn’t have time to just “click here and watch this” at the drop of an email.

But finally, they wore me down. Maybe it was the 25<sup>th</sup> forward with the same link saying “you’ve GOT to see this!” Or maybe it was Zelda Kennedy sticking her head in my office and saying, “have you SEEN this one yet?” Whatever made me do it, I finally “clicked here” ... and watched in awe as a Scottish singer named Susan Boyle transported an auditorium of Brits and a panel of cynical judges to a place of hope, joy and beauty with her rendition of “I Had A Dream” from *Les Misérables*.

And after I found my Kleenex, I sent an email to just about everybody I know saying ... you guessed it ... “you’ve GOT to see this!” And then I spent a little time reflecting on just why this YouTube moment had touched such a chord with me and with so many others.

It wasn’t just the lyric of the song she sang (and no, I am NOT going to sing it for you this morning ... I am no Susan Boyle!) ... although they *are* words that speak in a deep and meaningful way of the profoundly human dream of love and hope and life worth living that we share will all members of our human family:

*I dreamed a dream in time gone by  
When hope was high and life worth living  
I dreamed that love would never die  
I dreamed that God would be forgiving.*

It is not just the profound humanity of this dream – I believe – that touches a chord with us “no matter where we find ourselves on our journey” -- because it is not only a dream we all dream ... it is a dream the One who created us in love -- TO love and live and dream -- has dreamed for us as well.

It’s what our friend Archbishop Desmond Tutu has called “God’s Dream:”

*"God says to you, 'I have a dream. Please help me to realize it.' It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts. God's dream is that all God's children everywhere will know we belong in one family."*

And yet, the world conspires to tell us that dream is not real, not possible, not attainable ... that it IS “only a dream.” Or “grow up and live with it” – as one commenter on my blog put it this week.

And sometimes – all too often – those voices succeed in stamping out the hope and the joy – in trampling on the dream – our dream and God’s dream ... as Susan Boyle sang at the end of her 15 minutes of YouTube fame:

*I had a dream my life would be  
So different from the hell I'm living  
So different now from what it seemed  
Now life has killed the dream I dreamed*

Or not. Susan Boyle didn’t let life kill the dream she dreamed ... if she had, she’d have never managed at the ripe-young age of 47 to walk out onto that stage and face those eye-rolling judges and incredulous audience members and let loose with a performance that didn’t just sing a song but incarnated a dream.

For we hear from the writer of I John put it in our lesson this morning: “*See what love God has lavished on us, in letting us be called God’s children! That is in fact what we are ... and the the reason that the world does not recognize us is that it never recognized God.*”

And we hear in the

*I had a dream my life would be  
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“*Now life has killed the dream I dreamed.*” How many beloved children of God dwell this morning in a place of despair and hopelessness – how many find their dream of a

life worth living – of love that never dies – of a forgiving God – killed by life in a world that tells them they're not good enough or faithful enough, that their lives and hopes and dreams do not matter, that whoever they are and wherever they find themselves on their journey they are NOT welcome – unless they shape up, fit in, follow along,

Into that despair comes the Good News of the One who loved us enough to become one of us to show us how to walk in love with each other. Into that hopelessness comes the life and work and witness of Jesus – who lived the dream of life worth living and of love that never dies ... and who calls us to follow him in living our lives that way as children of God ... as the Body of Christ in the world ... as

And the lesson ends with these words: "Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous."

And the reader says, "Here what the spirit is saying to God's people." And we say, "Thanks be to God."

"God says to you, 'I have a dream. Please help me to realize it.' It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts." God's dream is that all God's children everywhere will know we belong in one family."

*You know what, in my country, in my family, I think that I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman. No offense to anybody out there, but that's how I was raised and that's how I think it should be between a man and a woman.*

When Jesus saw the large crowd, he went up the hill and sat down. His students gathered around him, and he began teaching them. This is what he said:

The spiritually humble are God's people,

for they are citizens of his new order.

They who are deeply concerned are God's people,

for they will see their ideas become reality.

They who are gentle are his people,

for they will be his partners across the land.

They who have an unsatisfied appetite for the right are God's people,

for they will be given plenty to chew on.

The generous are God's people,

for they will be treated generously.

Those whose motives are pure are God's people,

for they will have spiritual insight.

Men of peace and good will are God's people,

for they will be known throughout the land as his children.

Those who have endured much for what's right are God's people;

they are citizens of his new order.

You all are God's people when others call you names, and harass you and tell all kinds of false tales on you just because you follow me. Be cheerful and good-humored, because your spiritual advantage is great. For that's the way they treated people of conscience in the past.

See what love God has lavished on us, in letting us be called God's children! Yet that in fact is what we are. The reason that the world does not recognize us is that it never recognized God. My dear friends, now we are God's children, but it has not been revealed what we are to become in the future. We know that when it comes to light we will be like God, for we will see God as God really is. And all who keep this hope keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure. Anyone who sins at all breaks the Law, because to sin is to break the Law. Now, you know that Christ, who is sinless, appeared to abolish sin. So everyone who lives in union with Christ does not continue to sin, but whoever continues to sin has never seen or known Christ. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous.

*Take my hand / I'll lead you to salvation / Take my love / For love is everlasting / And remember / The truth that once was spoken, / To love another person / Is to see the face of God."*

Amen.