



WORKTALK WEEKLY

15 DECEMBER 2008

Words That Need Redefining

Welcome to WORKTALKweekly
This is the fourth in our Advent series on dreams.

#8 Dream

So far Joseph's dreams have led him to marry a pregnant fiancé and stay celibate until the baby is born - attracting gossip, criticism and some mocking for his trouble. They have led him from Bethlehem to Egypt with his wife and Son where he is living as a refugee in a strange land, attempting to support his family, no doubt eeking out a living as a carpenter, trying to obtain as much work from the locals as possible. His dreams have probably led him to learn a foreign language, watch his Son grow into a toddler away from his own family, and left him longing for home. Amongst other things, this is certainly a love story of a man giving up everything for the love of his wife and Son and the God they worship.

And somewhere in the mix will be his own dreams - whispers in his mind of ambition, security, wellbeing and achievement. Joseph, by following the commands given in his dreams, has found himself way outside the zones where his personal dreams would have taken him. There must have been times in these four years and nine months when he wondered what on earth had happened to him.

He knew about Herod's vicious murder of the baby boys of Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity, which would have left him full of terror, fear, relief that he was safe and guilt that he was somehow connected to the disaster. He would also have known that his present situation was temporary, so he finds himself stateless, listless and restless, occasionally pinching himself to check that this was really happening.

Financially they were trying to keep an income whilst, no doubt, living off the savings related to the acquisition of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Mary's story will be equally dramatic, but for now we are looking at the drama via Joseph's dreams).

You may find you can connect to some of Joseph's psyche. His fear, anxiety, guilt or amazement. His continued commitment to work and his glances at his dwindling savings. You might relate to his fierce love that led him to protect his wife and this Child which he knows is not really his, but is definitely his responsibility. You, like him, might occasionally realize you are caught up in a bigger story while you struggle to learn your lines or find your path.

You can also be sure that Joseph held in his mind the thought that, sooner or later, the call would come to go home. The call - he suspected - would be in a dream and when it came it would interweave with his own dream of going home to live the life he wanted, find a way of doing what he knew he could do - develop his skills, supply his family, serve his God and make his friends.

We don't know whether he went to bed each night wondering when the dream would come but you can be sure that when news of Herod's death arrived, he was in a heightened state of vigilance.

Finally the dream arrives - it's got the same feel as the previous one - with slightly less urgency - get up and go. This time Joseph himself would have injected the urgency and excitement because he really wanted to go home.

When you look back on Joseph's journeys you can easily see that he was entrusted with the safety of the Son of God. These journeys were huge - full of meaning and purpose. Caught up in a global conflict between powers, this Jewish carpenter was living out a life of nerve-wracking

importance. By contrast you just go to work.

But there is more than meets the eye if you're prepared to explore. God is taking an ordinary carpenter because He wants you to know that's the deal. Carpenters, shepherds, fisherman, tax-collectors, doctors, politicians and lawyers all figured in the story of the Son of God and still do. You're still asked to earn a living to serve the purposes of the Son and still asked to watch your savings dwindle whilst your assets get transferred to heaven. That's the drama.

Your work is always going to be a mixture of doing the job with one eye on the past - dealing with fear, panic, anxiety and guilt, trying to care for yourself and those you love, sometimes feeling a stranger and sometimes feeling a fraud.

But all the time your personally held dreams are of home - a home where things start to make sense, your gifts are fully expressed and there is a harmony between the massive dream and your role in the play. And God knows it - so the calls come - go home.

Sometimes it's a one-off, one-time big dream that you know changes your life. More often it's just a smaller step, when you know your dreams are merging with the meta-dream of the Son. In Joseph's case, Herod had died and his agents were not on the rampage in the same way. In your case something may have to die for your dream to live - a thought pattern, a working practice or a personal habit (maybe even the passing of a person) but the journeys of Joseph are not unique to him.

So when you see a breakthrough - something change - a Herodian death, put your mind on alert, for God may be preparing you for a dream of home - these dreams are not hard to obey because you want to go anyway. If you want to find the personal purpose in your dreams don't forget to take the child with you.

© Geoff Shattock December 2008

BIBLE SECTION

Matthew 2:19

19After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

All WORKTALKweekly archives are for personal use only. For permission to use for any other purposes please email using the address below thank you.

WORKTALK, 56 Baldry Gardens, London SW16 3DJ
T: +44 (0)20 8764 8080
<http://www.worktalk.gs>
comms@worktalk.gs