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Broken Dreams

by Rev. Jerry L. McGlone

Luke 24:13-21

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?”

And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

And he said to them, “What things?”

And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.”

Broken dreams. I'm sure you've had your fair share of them in your life. And if you've learned anything from life, you've learned that it's not the broken dream that should dominate, but what you do afterward.

A few years ago, in Washington, D.C. there was an auction of broken dreams. That auction was held by the United States Patent Office.

Years ago, the Patent Office required every inventor to present a working model of his or her invention. A person could not get a patent if he or she did not give the Patent Office a model. Over the years, the Patent

Office ended up with an enormous collection of models. The trouble was, they were running out of room in their storage buildings and needed to clear out a few things. So, they held an auction to sell off several of the old patent models of inventions that didn't quite make it in the marketplace.

One hundred fifty thousand patent models went up for auction. What that really amounted to was selling off one hundred fifty thousand broken dreams. One hundred fifty thousand broken dreams were put up for sale.

Among those one hundred fifty thousand items was a model of an illuminated cat. The inventor thought it would scare away mice in the middle of the night.

There was a machine that promised to prevent snoring. It was a trumpet that attached to the snorer's mouth, circled around and ended up with the bell of the trumpet pointed into the snorer's own ear. Put that thing on and as soon as you started to snore, you'd wake yourself up.

There was an automatic foot warmer. It was a mask you would put over your mouth. There was a tube attached to the mask. Every time you exhaled, that tube was supposed to carry the warm air from your mouth all the way down to your feet. The inventor claimed his contraption would keep your feet toasty warm through those long, cold, Buffalo winter nights.

There was even an adjustable pulpit. I'd like one of those. With it installed, I could dramatically illustrate all the points of my sermon by making the pulpit shoot up higher or fall down lower. I could put on a real show.

There were one hundred fifty thousand of these things for sale. Every one of them was someone's dream. But not one of them amounted to anything.

By the time the auction ended, they had sold off one hundred fifty thousand broken dreams. It's kind of sad to think about, don't you think?

Now when it comes to religion, there's an eerie kind of similarity to that auction.

If, in your own personal faith, you happen to think of God as the creator of this universe - and I suppose most of you do...

- and **if** you see God as the one who dreamed up everything there is in all of creation - and I imagine you do in some fashion...

- **then**, when you look at the Bible, which unfolds the story of creation, and you can see it as a book filled with broken dreams. God's broken dreams for His universe!

Just consider a few of His dreams that didn't quite make it.

God had a dream for men and women. He dreamed they would live in peace and harmony throughout eternity in the Garden of Eden. But, what He got in reality was Adam and Eve. They gave into temptation and got kicked out of the Garden for good. That was a broken dream.

God had a dream that humanity would welcome the baby Jesus when he was born in that stable in Bethlehem, that all men and women would recognize the infant and crown him king of their lives. But instead, God was confronted with King Herod's massacre of the innocent babies. God's dream that His children could learn to live in innocence and love was shattered.

God then dreamed another dream, a dream that in Jesus, the people would learn how to live in love and forgiveness, that they would tear down all the walls that kept God's children apart and separated them from their Heavenly Father. Instead, God watched as the soldiers marched Jesus off to Golgotha.

God had a dream that even when Jesus was up there suffering and dying on the cross, that even at the last hour, that people would recognize Jesus as a man of love, as a man whose righteousness exceeded that of the Pharisees, as a man who would willingly give up his life that all others might be saved. But, God saw Jesus' closest friends desert him, and his followers fall away, and no one believe any more.

When you look at it that way, it's a sad tale. It can make you feel sorry for God.

God is the great inventor. He created mankind in His own image. When He did that, God dreamed that His children would live their lives according to His plan. God created. God dreamed. God turned His children loose in this paradise. And every one of His dreams for His children was shattered.

You can look at the Bible and see it as a book of broken dreams: God's dreams for His children - and along the way, mankind's dreams, too.

But the good news breaks through all the sadness. When you look at the Bible and find all of God's broken dreams, be sure to look to see what

God did next. Every time His children disappointed Him, God dreamed another dream for them.

Today's scripture lesson tells of how God's dreams evolved and changed over time and disappointment. Today's scripture lesson tells of a new dream - a new dream God has for you, a dream you can yet fulfill.

The scripture lesson begins with two fellows out on the road to Emmaus. They were in a sorry state. Their dreams had been shattered. Their hopes had been dashed. Their plans for a glorious tomorrow had been wiped away.

With their heads hanging low and their spirits defeated, they were walking down the road to Emmaus, when all of the sudden a stranger walked up to them and asked what was going on.

They told this stranger everything they knew about the sad circumstances. They told him about Jesus of Nazareth, about the mighty deeds he had done, and about the miracles he had worked. They told him about the things Jesus had taught them about God, and about how he had touched the lives of so many people.

Then, they got to the sad part, the end of the story, about how the crowds had turned against Jesus, and about how the religious leaders had conspired against him. They told this stranger all about Jesus' arrest and trial, and about his crucifixion and death.

Then, they said the words that can break your heart. "Oh how we had hoped he was the one," they said. [Luke 24:21]

"Oh how we had hoped he was the one our God had promised to send."

"Oh how we had dreamed he was the one who was going to save us."

"Oh how we had thought he was the one we had been waiting for."

But with every strike of hammer upon nail as the spikes were driven into his hands and feet - their dreams for life were torn open.

With every painful breath he drew as he hung upon that cross - their dreams were ripped apart.

With every gasping word he spoke before he breathed his last - their dreams were broken.

So there they were, those two men, walking down the road to Emmaus with shattered dreams and empty lives.

I suspect you know what that's like. Haven't you had dreams that just never made it? Haven't you come limping back down the road, with the broken pieces of your dream stuffed in your pocket?

It was a sure-fire program, you thought - but when you tried it, it sure fell flat.

It was a solution to all your problems, you hoped - but in the end, it didn't solve a thing.

It was a promising panacea - but it just didn't pan out.

Oh how you had hoped this was going to be the one thing that would turn your life around - but it didn't work out!

Yes, I suspect every single one of you knows about busted dreams.

St. Paul knew about broken dreams. He wrote a letter to his friends in Rome. "I'll stop by and see you," he wrote, "on my way to Spain."

Going to Spain was his dream. He dreamed about doing his greatest work in Spain. He dreamed about converting every man and woman to Christ - in Spain. He dreamed about the day when everything would go his way - and he knew it would happen, when he finally got over there in Spain.

But the closest he ever got to Spain was a jail cell in Rome.

You may not end up in jail, but you know what it's like to dream about Spain - or Florida - or Nirvana. I think it happens to every person. You have one dream about the kind of life you're going to live, but you end up being forced to live another kind of life.

I suspect the president had a dream of what it was going to be like to be president - a dream filled with all the great things he was going to do, a dream about all the great things history was going to write about him. But, I suspect that today he knows the reality of being president is a far different thing than his dream.

You're not the president, and you're not Paul. You're not even Cleopas walking down the road to Emmaus; but you have some sense of what they went through. Because you know you dream one life and end up living another. Like every other person, so many of your dreams get broken.

And the theological question for you today is:

What do you do with all the broken pieces - when that's all you've got left of your fondest dreams? How do you go on when you realize you're not going to get what you wanted?

Go back to Cleopas, his friend, and that stranger on the road to Emmaus. "Oh how they had dreamed Jesus was the one." And it seemed to them that their dreams were forever shattered. It seemed to them that their dreams were finished when Jesus was buried in that tomb.

"It's been three whole days since he died," they said, and life just didn't seem worth living.

Their dreams had been bruised and torn and broken. The trouble for them was they were so disappointed and disillusioned and depressed that they never once considered any alternatives.

They never once considered that maybe their dreams had not been dashed forever - but just altered for the better.

They never once thought that their dreams had not been destroyed - but had just been delayed for a short while.

What they forgot was that the God who created everything -

- the God who dreamed the first dream for His children -

- the God who dreams of love and second chances -

- they forgot that God was still in charge.

Oh, yes, this story like so many other stories in the Bible may have started out as a tale of broken dreams, but it ends with the ultimate triumph belonging to God.

Today's scripture lesson tells you again that God's dream for mankind will ultimately triumph. Never forget that the central claim of the New Testament is the victory of God's goodness.

When your eyes are fully opened to that fact, then you will be able to pick up all the broken pieces of your own shattered dreams and forge ahead.

The greatest day in your life is Easter morning - the same day when Cleopas and his friend had their eyes fully opened to God's wonder-working, miraculous power of rebirth.

When Easter comes, if you have opened your eyes to see Jesus Christ in all his glory, you will know in your heart that -

- even when you feel defeated and are facing your lowest moments of despair and disappointment,

- even when you are convinced that evil is in control, and you see the devil strutting around as if he were the victor,
- even when words of anger are hurled back and forth in your family,
- even when there is hatred lurking around every corner -
- even then...
 - you will know,
 - that goodness will eventually triumph,
 - and kindness will surely overcome,
 - and love will reign supreme!

Easter is coming soon. The message I want you to get is that God's dream of love still holds true - no matter what kind of evil mankind may invent. God's dream of love will always triumph - no matter what darkness and death may design.

God's dream will always win. From the Garden of Eden to Bethlehem, from Calvary to the road to Emmaus, from Jerusalem to North Tonawanda - along the road, with mankind in charge...

- surely innocence will suffer,
- surely the good and lovely will face tragedies they don't deserve,
- surely your dreams will be broken to bits.

Some days evil may appear to win. Some mornings the devil may dance. But the Good News of Jesus Christ is that goodness will never be kept locked away in the dark, and the truth will never stay crucified.

If you believe in the goodness of the resurrection, your life can claim an unbelievable power and freedom to keep on dreaming.

So,

believe in goodness - no matter what may happen in your life...

believe in goodness - even when your fondest hopes are torn apart...

believe in goodness - and your God will help you repair,
and alter,
and renew,
all your broken dreams.