

DREAMS THAT COME TRUE

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh." Genesis 37:19.

We do not wonder that Joseph was the favorite son of his father, but Jacob made a great mistake in showing his partiality. A father does not have the right to show favoritism to one child, however clever, good or handsome the child may be. If we cannot look for equal justice to be administered by a parent, where in this world are we to look for it?

In Joseph from first to last there is something that attracts our attention. He was never common or vulgar. His life was full of lights and shadows, thrilling incidents and hair-breadth escapes. It commenced with dreams, which seemed wild and absurd to those who heard them. It passed through stern realities and awful tribulation which put those dreams to flight and indeed reduced them to a dismal mockery. This story has something to say to us all, and it should be a very fount of inspiration to all young people who take in its lessons.

Of Joseph they said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." They said it with a scornful laugh which was half fun and half anger. No doubt his dreams had an element of the ridiculous about them; and to tell them was a piece of silly self-conceit. It must have been peculiarly irritating for those strong full-grown lads to hear this young chap talking about the great future which awaited him, and informing them that in a dream he had seen the whole lot of them, father and mother included, kneeling at his feet and doing him homage. Their unwise father, by all the coddling and petting, made Joseph think that he was already a world's wonder, and had done all that a good father could to stuff him with vanity and spoil him.

Joseph was a clever youth, who expressed his thoughts frankly and honestly. He was a gifted youth, with a fire of genius beginning to burn. He was a godly youth, with the consciousness that God was calling him to a high and noble life. His brothers did not read him aright; in fact, they did not read him at all. There was a real greatness in him which they did not understand. He moved above their level in a world of higher thoughts; he had aims and ambitions and prayers which they despised. He saw and felt that which they did not see and did not feel. He had aspirations far above any which they had. He looked up, and their eyes were fastened to the earth; and because of this they first envied and hated him. They said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." That was all they saw in him -- a stupid, puffed-up, useless dreamer.

It is doubtful if there has ever been a gifted and great man in the world, a man who has aspired to the higher things, but what the people around snubbed and condemned him as a dreamer. If you set your thoughts above the thoughts of the crowd around you, you will be greeted with some such criticism as that. If any young person goes boldly and earnestly into the Christian life and flings his energies into Christian work, he is sure to be laughed at and pitied by all those of the lighter and lewdersort, whose aspirations never get above the world of sports.

The eleven brothers were but a type of the general run of men. To them Joseph was nothing but a dreamer because he set his affections on higher things and was fired by ambitions which to them had no meaning. It is good that youth should have dreams, bright, brave visions of the future; visions of something better than pleasures, better than wealth, better than an easy life; visions of a good, truthful and serviceable manhood or womanhood. It is better to have visions than not to have. It is far better to be ambitious and to aim at the stars than to aim at nothing, for if you do not quite hit the stars, you will shoot a lot higher than if you always aim at the dust heap at your feet and never get above it.

The man of vision usually meets with contempt and scorn. The dreamer is considered visionary, impractical and ineffective in the real business of living. Such a man finds that people mistrust him and consider him unreliable. They do not understand him, nor do they have the desire to listen to him as he tells of the thoughts that have surged through his mind.

Joseph and his dreams were distinctly distasteful to his brothers, whose thinking seems never to have risen higher than the earth. To them he was a pest to be gotten rid of in the most convenient way. Their attitude toward Joseph and their treatment of him are typical of what seers and dreamers have experienced through the years. And his achievements, despite the opposition which he met, are but a fair example of the noble army of dreamers who have led the race into new and better ways.

When we speak of dreamers and their dreams we are thinking not of those who spend their time in idle and fruitless reveries, but of those who see through the material and beyond the present to something nobler. They see a goal that beckons them. There is a significant difference between air castles and dreams. When we build air castles we desire something that we never really expect to obtain; but the dream means a desire in which there is purpose and the resolve to make it come to pass.

I. The Dreamer.

The dreamer is a fundamental necessity in human life. From the brain of some dreamer, who dreams and works like Edison, that wizard of electricity, come all the mighty achievements of men.

There are certain characteristics of Joseph the dreamer to which I want to call to your attention.

1. He had the eye of a seer.

Joseph was a man who looked beyond the present. Having heard of the promises that God had made to Abraham, and of the coming splendor of his father's house, Joseph was in quest of a kingdom while his brothers were seeking only for pastures. While others saw the flocks and herds as an end in themselves, he saw in them the means to a more glorious end. Therein lies the difference in a real Christian and the man of affairs today. The close follower of Christ does not neglect his business. You will find him in his office as early as others and he is as careful and as earnest in the management of his affairs as is the intense worldlian. While others have their gaze on the ledgers, his eyes are toward the kingdom that is yet to come. The true dreamer is one who looks through things that are near and sees the far off glory of the age that is yet to come, and makes his material prosperity minister to his future blessedness.

2. He had the faith of a prophet.

Joseph saw the difficulties that lay in the way of the fulfilment of the divine promise, but he dared to believe that God would find a way. But with Joseph a dream was more than a wish -- it was a definite conviction that the promise would be realized. Like Joseph we must look at the promises, and not at the difficulties.

3. He had the heart of a brother.

Joseph knew that his brothers hated him, and he knew of the danger involved in placing himself in their hands, but when their father commanded him to go to them he obeyed promptly. If they would not treat him like a brother, at least he would be a brother to them. And let us not forget that in the end they all came and bowed down to him. Joseph respected the burden that they were carrying, and was willing to endure their cruelty in order to convey to them a blessing.

4. He had the courage of a warrior.

As a lad of seventeen, Joseph faced real hardships in order to do his duty. Perhaps the bravest thing he ever did was to inform his father of the evil deeds of his other sons. Joseph realized that his first obligation was to his father,

and he refused to stand idly and silently by and see his law defied. That sort of thing requires courage. Nobility has obligations peculiarly her own. The kingly person is one who can surrender his personal preferences for the good of the community.

5. He had the patience of a saint.

For fifteen years Joseph was a slave and a prisoner. During all that time he had not received any word from home, so he knew that he was counted as dead. On every side evil seemed triumphant. His brothers were living on the plains and reaping the rewards of successful intrigue. There was no longer a Joseph to report their ugly and ungodly conduct, and they did not care about the bereavement of their father. Potiphar's wife continued to wear her jewels while her victim was wearing shackles, but the patience of Joseph never wavered. He still believed that God was going to fulfil the promises which He had made to Abraham, although the chariots of Providence seemed to be going in the other direction.

II. The Dream.

Perhaps someone would like to ask, what possible good can come from such dreaming? Let us see what the dream did for Joseph and then we may learn what it will do for us.

1. It gave direction to Joseph's life.

Joseph's dream was the star that held him steadily on his course. As the river flows between its two banks toward the sea, so between the two dreams of his boyhood Joseph's life moved onward to its full fruition. Let us not forget that a wish is only a dream in the egg. It must be warmed by the heart and brooded on in the purposes. If it lasts, it is to become our glory.

2. It gave strength to Joseph in the hour of temptation.

The day came when Satan spread before Joseph his most tempting bait. He whispered to him not only of personal gratification, but of the gain that Potiphar's wife could win for him as her companion in evil doing, and of the peril that awaited him should he deny her request. Well was the poet said, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

In that trying hour there was one thing that held Joseph in the path of rectitude, and that was his dream. The dream of coming greatness, of the day that was yet to dawn, kept his feet in the path of rectitude and caused him to exclaim, "How can I do this evil thing and sin against God?"

3. It gave Joseph comfort in the hour of sorest trial.

Imagine that young man, separated from the father he loved, and surrounded by those who did not have any sympathy for him, and yet he never yielded to despair because he believed that one day God would open the door of his prison. A great hope is a sure preventive of despondency.

4. It crowned Joseph with enduring glory.

Joseph, the dreamer, became the able and efficient food administrator of Egypt. His brothers were compelled to go to Egypt to buy bread. They appeared before their brother whom they had wronged, who had become the highly honored Prime Minister, and to him they had to bow to receive the blessing. This was followed

by Joseph making himself known to them, and then the first dream was fulfilled. The second dream is still in process of fulfilment, and in the end it will be fulfilled completely.

Unfortunately, there are many who are never lifted above life's dull routine by the dream of better things to come. Happy are those who can look beyond the dark gray skies of winter and see the springtime that is to follow.

Many are like Joseph in that they start out with high ambition to be somebody and to do something, but whose visions are rudely dispelled. In such an experience they often find that God is near. God turned the evil intention of Joseph's brothers into a blessing. In the dark hours and the seemingly hopeless experiences God works on behalf of those who trust Him.

Every dreamer must surmount obstacles. You are not going to have an easy time realizing your dreams. Joseph apparently imagined that the world was waiting at his feet, and that he was going to have an easy march to its honors and crowns. He had a sudden awakening. Most people get that rude and rough awakening who start out with a great conceit of their own abilities, who fancy that they are going to carry all before them and ascend the hill of success with a few hasty strides. However clever you are, you will have to work your way up slowly, with many a tumble, yes, and perhaps some knock-down blows. And if your ambition cannot bear these things, so much the worse for it. It will be like the chaff which the wind bloweth away.

Joseph thought that he was cut out for kingship, and that anything less than that was quite beneath his dignity. And God sent him to a very hard school to be taught humility and other elementary lessons. He found himself a slave, and then a prisoner, thrust into prison on a false charge and kept there with little hope of release, forgotten by everybody it appeared. But Joseph tells us later on that it was God Who sent him there. God loved the youth better than did his father, and He sent him to the best school. It took away his foolish self-conceit, skimmed off the froth of vanity and left the things that were substantial. This discipline made him a man.

There was in Joseph that which hardship could not kill. That which would crush feebler souls calls out the slumbering giant in nobler ones. It is probable the nine tenths of the young men tumbled down into that very wretched and unpromising place would have given up, lost heart, courage and every incentive, and would have remained just where and as they had fallen. Joseph shook himself from the dust and said, "I must play the man now. Whether slave or freeman, I must act like a king, doing all the lowly services with a willing heart and to the best of my powers." Aware that the watchful eyes of God were upon him always and everywhere, Joseph kept himself pure, did his duty, worked hard, served cheerfully, won respect, commanded trust, and received a promotion.

You are not going to win the battle of life because you fancy that you have extraordinary gifts, or because you think that you are going to be exceptionally lucky. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Still less are its prizes won in some lottery of luck. They are won by those who can bear burdens without flinching, who can get up again with a hopeful face after every fall, and who put their hearts into the work and make the best of it, however lowly it may be. Look to God for light, pray to Him for guidance, and ask Him for the daily strength which you will need. It is very well to dream as Joseph did, but it is much better to dream, to pray and to work, for only in that way are dreams going to come true.

The noblest achievements were first dreams in the soul of somebody. In 1666 the city of London was destroyed by fire. Sir Christopher Wren, the famous architect, was thirty-four years of age at that time. As he looked upon the blackened and smoldering ruins of the city he saw a vision of a new London far surpassing the old. A part of his dream came true, and he lived to see the completion of Saint Paul's Cathedral, which it took thirty-five years to build. Today one reads this inscription over one of its doorways:

"Beneath is buried Christopher Wren, architect of this church and city, who lived more than ninety-years, not for himself, but for the public good. Reader, if thou seekest his monument, look around."

And this man is but one of multitudes who, to some degree at least, have been able to turn into realities the stuff out of which dreams are made.

One thing that is absolutely essential, if our dreams are to come true, is to be in league with God. In one of the darkest hours of the Civil War somebody said to President Lincoln, "I think it is tremendously important to get God on our side." Mr. Lincoln replied in his characteristic way, "I think we need not trouble about that. What I am anxious about is that we get on God's side."

No one can hope to come to anything but defeat if he leaves God out of his life. With a dauntless faith in God, apply yourself to the task which He has assigned you, rise above littleness, be true to God, and do your best in every undertaking for His glory.