

The Parish of Halas

Together in Christ

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On Christmas Eve, 1967, Dr Martin Luther King recalled a dream he had had four years previously. He said:

"In 1963, on a sweltering August afternoon, we stood in Washington, D.C., and talked to the nation about many things. Toward the end of the afternoon I tried to talk to the nation about a dream that I had had, and I remember that not long after that dream I started seeing it turn into a nightmare".

King went on to recall that dream turning into a nightmare as four innocent young African-American girls were murdered in a church in Birmingham, Alabama, as he saw the poverty of his brothers and sisters amid an ocean of prosperity and as the war in Vietnam escalated. He concluded:

"Yes, I am personally the victim of deferred dreams, of blasted hopes, but in spite of that I close today by saying I still have a dream because, you know, you can't give up in life".

Had King lived then, tragically, he would have seen 'deferred dreams' and 'blasted hopes' over half century later in the same city in which he had given his most famous speech. He would have seen footage of an unarmed family man asphyxiated for a full nine minutes by a police officer in Minneapolis. He would have seen a crowd of peaceful protestors driven from the streets by armed officers to take way for a photo opportunity. He would have seen armed men deployed on the streets wearing no badges and refusing to tell journalists who they were, a most sinister development. *"But, in spite of that.....I still have a dream because, you know, you can't give up in life"*

Speaking this week at George Floyd's memorial service, Rev Al Sharpton said this:

"I want you to know in my life there's times that I lost hope. Things can happen like this that will dash your hope, but there is something that is sister to hope called faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen".

In the same sermon - well worth reading or, better still, watching - Sharpton spoke of two incidents, the contrast between which gave him hope that change might come. In a march many years ago a young white woman had approached him and, using a term of racist abuse, had told him to go home. Last week, by contrast, a young white girl had approached him and, as he braced himself, had said simply, *"No justice, no peace"*. I have been similarly inspired by the anger, passion and determination of the young to seek a better world during the course of this past week.

What has this to do with us in a small town on the other side of the Atlantic? Well, first of all, of course, because we believe that every person is a child of God and should have the dignity and the opportunities of a child of God. Second, because if we claim the name of 'Christian' then we are called upon to imagine God's hope for all God's people and to help make that hope come into effect. We are called upon to be those who, in the words of the prophet we heard St Peter quote in our reading for Pentecost last week, those who have visions and dream dreams. That goes for our brothers and sisters in America, as our Episcopalian friends have borne witness this past week. It goes for our own society which Coronavirus has tragically demonstrated to be broken in its own way along fault lines of poverty, race and vulnerability. It goes to for our whole world community - people, and plants and animals, ecosystems, the whole vibrant community of Planet Earth. If we're not having visions and dreaming dreams, if we're not protesting the kingdoms of this world because we're dreaming of the Kingdom of God then, quite simply, we are not Christ's Church. We seek to be a caring Church, a Church of prayer and worship, of nurture by teaching. But we need also to be a prophetic Church. And if we find ourselves thinking that there's nothing we can do, then we need to remember that we are people of Faith. We have faith that the God in whom we believe, in whom we put our trust, can change things, turn things around: that the power of God's love is enough, if only we open ourselves to it and live by it.



Again, we ask for your thoughts, prayers, reflections or pictures of what Christian Faith in Holy Week and Eastertide has been like for you in this dark and strange time. It doesn't need to be a theological treatise! But if some aspect of our Faith has meant something to you in this time - or if this time has shone a new light on your faith - then please share it with us, by emailing it to one of the clergy or by popping something drawn, written or even photographed through one of our doors. Your insights into our shared Faith will surely shine Christ's light into the faith of your brothers and sisters in the Halas Team.

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