

November 11, 2018

Isaiah 11:6-9

The Dreams

“Stop IT! Stop IT! For God’s Sake STOP!” screamed Marilyn as she sat bolt upright out of a sound sleep. Instinctively she reached out, searching for her helmet. Instead she found her husband, rolling over to comfort her.

“It was just a dream, just a dream. You’re home now” he said, stroking her hair softly.

“Mama, mama, what’s wrong?” came a small voice, as young Joel ran into the room.

“Mommy had another bad dream,” Marilyn said, breathing deeply. “Time to get ready to go to the service anyway, why don’t you and daddy go down and start breakfast,” she suggested. “And make sure great-grandpa is awake too”.

After they had left Marilyn sat still for a moment. When would the dreams stop? It had been a year since she had returned from her Peacekeeping mission, but still she kept hearing gunfire and seeing angry people in her head. Even worse were the visions of blood and mangled bodies from a bombing or a mine explosion. When would it all stop?

When Marilyn got down to the kitchen everybody else was already eating. She looked over at her grandfather, resplendent in his Legion blazer and bar of medals on his chest. She knew how important this day was for him every year.

“Did the dreams come again, dear?” he asked gently.

“Yes,” Marilyn said sadly. “Grandpa, when do they stop? When do I get to sleep again?”

“I don’t know,” he said thoughtfully. “I still get them once in a while. I wake up convinced I am back in Italy with the guns blazing. But they don’t come as often, a little less often each year.”

Young Joel couldn’t contain himself. “Why do you cry so much, Mommy? Aren’t you happy to be back?”

Marilyn tried to answer but the words just weren’t there. Instead she reached out and wrapped Joel in her arms, tears streaming down her face.

It was Great-Grandpa Joel who answered. “Your mommy is very happy to be home, Joel. But sometimes there are things that happen that we can’t leave behind us very easily.”

“You mean, like when you were in the war?” asked Joel, fighting to free himself from his mother’s arms.

“Yes,” said the older Joel. “Even though I came home 60 years ago I still cry when I think about those days and remember the friends I made, and the friends who never came back.”

“Is that why we are honoring veterans today?” asked the child. “My teacher says that Veterans Day is a special day when we remember everyone who fought in the wars.”

“That’s right,” said the older man. “Each year I go and remember all those things. It hurts; it hurts a lot sometimes.”

“But if it hurts, why do you do it?” young Joel asked.

“Because I have to. Because if we don’t remember, then we don’t learn,” came the reply.

Young Joel thought about that for a moment. “Learn what?” he asked.

“That war is a terrible thing,” his great-grandpa replied.

“Did you kill people in the war?” the young boy asked.

“JOEL!” his father said, trying to shush him.

“No, it’s okay,” the veteran replied. “Yes Joel, I am sure that I did. But I don’t like to think about that. I saw a lot of people get killed and hurt too.”

“Is that what you see, when you have the dreams?”

“Yes, that is a part of it.”

“But my mom didn’t go to war. She promised she wasn’t going to war. Why does she have such bad dreams?” This time Joel’s eyes were filling with tears. “I don’t like it when she cries, or screams at night.”

Marilyn tried to answer, but couldn’t, her voice suddenly disappeared, so the old veteran spoke again. “Your mom did something very hard, Joel. She went to a place where people were fighting and stood in between them. WE call that being a peacemaker. Canadians have done a lot of it over the years, in fact it was a Canadian that came up with the idea.”

Young Joel tried to understand, “So, they go to make people stop fighting?” he asked.

“Well, sort of,” Great-grandpa replied. “But sometimes the people are so mad that they still try to hurt each other. Then people like your mom and her friends get caught in the middle.”

“Oh,” said Joel, “that was very brave, mama.”

Marilyn smiled. “Thank you, sweetheart. But I was just doing my job.”

Suddenly young Joel looked very confused. “Last Sunday my Sunday School teacher told me that war is a bad thing. Why did so many people do a bad thing?” he asked. For a moment nobody said anything as all the adults tried to come up with an answer. Then Old Joel sighed heavily.

“Your teacher was right, Joel. War is a very, very, very bad thing. But sometimes we have to do bad things, because to not do them would be worse.”

Now Joel was really confused. “That doesn’t make sense,” he said. “Either you do the right thing or the wrong thing.”

“Well,” his great-grandfather said, “that is usually right. But sometimes we have to choose what is less wrong. People call

that choosing between two evils. Have you ever heard a story about wolves lying down with lambs?” The boy nodded. “Well that comes from the Bible, it is talking about how God would like us to live, how God wants even old enemies to learn how to be together without fighting. Until we learn how to do that there will still be times when people like your mom and I have to go and see terrible things.”

Young Joel thought about this for a moment. Then he looked deep into the old man’s eyes and asked, “Great-grandpa, are you sorry you went to war?”

The old man’s face paled for a moment. “No, I don’t think I am sorry I went.” he said slowly. “I am just sorry that I had to go.”

Joel looked at his mom. “And are you sorry you went away, mama?”

“I think I would say the same as grandpa, dear. I went because I had to. I just wish nobody ever had to.”

Joel looked at his mom, and then at his great-grandfather, then back at his mom. “I think you are both really brave,” he said, “and I think it is good you did what you had to do. And I really hope we can get a pet wolf and a pet lamb to live together sometime really soon. I hope people will stop killing each other and maybe then mama’s dreams will go away.”

“I hope so too honey,” said Marilyn, “I hope so too.”

“Come on, it’s almost time to leave for the service.”

Gord Waldie
Worship Offerings blog