

January 2023 Newsletter

A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream
deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—
And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

On February 8th, 2013, while strolling the blistering cold streets of Chicago, I stumbled upon a used bookstore called “After-Words Bookstore.” I remember walking in the bookstore and being smacked in the face with the strong scent of used books. As I perused through the various books, I came across a book entitled *Meditations of the Heart* by Howard Thurman. I flipped through the pages and somehow stumbled upon the following:

Where there is no dream, the life becomes a swamp, a dreary dead place and deep within, a [person’s] heart begins to rot. The dream need not be some great and overwhelming plan; it need not be a dramatic picture of what might or must be someday; it need not be a concrete outpouring of a world-shaking

possibility of such fulfillment. Such may be important for some; such may be crucial for a particular moment in human history. But it is not in these grand ways that the dream nourishes life. The dream is the quiet persistence in the heart that enable a [person] to ride out the storms of [their] churning experience. It is the exciting whisper moving through the aisles of [the person’s heart] ...It is the ever-recurring melody in the midst of the broken harmony...Keep alive the dream; for as long as a [person] has a dream in [their] heart, [they] cannot lose the significance of living.

Dreams. Hopes. Aspirations. Desires. Ambitions. They are tricky little things, aren’t they? On one hand, like a film playing across the screen of our imaginations, we can see the pictures of what we desire so clearly, so precisely, so accurately. On the other hand, when we pinch ourselves and come to the realization that there is a huge gulf between the burning desire of our heart and reality, like 250-pound man stepping on the toy of a toddler, our dreams can become crushed; swept up into the dustpan; and thrown in the trash.

In the year 2023, maybe it is time for us to put on some rubber gloves and dig deep into the bottom of the trash to retrieve and restore those crushed dreams. Because dreams are like seeds planted deep in the soil of our hearts, that give us the drive to keep going; to keep pushing; to keep living; and even to keep

getting out of bed, morning after morning and day after day. Like Howard Thurman said, these dreams don’t have to be some earth-moving aspiration. It can be something as simple as helping to make sure a grandchild walks across the stage with a college degree in their hands. It can be something as simple as you re-visiting (and completing) a project that you abandoned 10, 15, or 20 years ago. It can be something as simple as you as learning a second: Spanish, Dutch, Mandarin Chinese, or even Ukrainian. It can be something as simple as starting a support group for empty nesters. It can be you becoming a foster parent; or tutoring students at a low-performing school. Regardless of what it is, don’t stop dreaming. Because once you stop dreaming, you stop living. It is the dream that lives in our hearts that give us a reason to get out of bed in the morning. It is the dreams that are etched in our hearts that cause of to smile, even when dark clouds threaten to rain on our parade.

I’m going to leave you with this question: In the year 2023, which one of your crushed dreams do you plan to retrieve from the bottom of the trash can?

Keep this in mind: It’s never too late to be what you might’ve been or to do what you should’ve done.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Michael L. Sloan

