

## From Dreams to Hope

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**JEREMIAH 17:5-10 (NRSV)** *Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup>They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup>They shall* *be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. <sup>9</sup>The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse-- who can understand it? <sup>10</sup>I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.*

I woke up with an ear worm Wednesday morning. You know what an ear worm is? It's a song—or part of a song—that's stuck in your ear, and just keeps playing over and over. I wake up with them frequently. Sometimes they almost drive me crazy; and sometimes they're pretty cool.

The one I had Wednesday was one of the cool ones: Bloody Mary's song from Rogers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific":

*"You gotta have a dream  
if you don't have a dream  
How you gonna have a dream come true?"*

Dreams are important in life. They fill music and literature and history: from Don Quixote's "Impossible Dream" to Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Dreams impact persons and relationships: from a young couple standing on a hillside dreaming of a home that might someday be built there, to visions of sugar-plums dancing in the heads of children on Christmas Eve.

But a society built on pragmatism discounts dreams and dreamers: "You're just dreaming..." Are you old enough to remember the Everly Brothers' hit song in the 50s about dreaming? The punch line was, "Only trouble is, gee whiz, I'm dreaming my life away." Or the Disney theme song: "When you wish upon a star your dreams come true." How's that been working out for you?

Dreams and wishes typically are labeled unrealistic—even self-deluding. A dream can be a cherished ambition or desire, or an idea created in your imagination. That's the key: it comes from within you.

And yet, without dreams we never would have had air flight. Today, a journey that took our forefathers weeks and required courage and endurance now takes hours, and transpires in relative comfort and safety.

Without dreams we'd never have had a Declaration of Independence—or a Constitution.

Contemplative Christians say God speaks to us through our dreams, which may explain why they can have such constructive influence on life and history. So, I

got to thinking (which can be dangerous): I wonder if God speaks to me through ear worms: "If you don't have a dream, how you gonna' have a dream come true?"

I was studying today's text from Jeremiah. I read it first in the King James Version: "*Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.*" So, I reasoned, dreams... hope... I can get a sermon out of this.

Hope. I looked it up. Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen." We want something to happen and think that it could happen. So, we live with the expectancy that it might happen.

But it turns out there's a difference between dreams and hope: while dreams come from within us, hope comes from another source. We expect something to happen. So we wait in anticipation.

I kept digging. The same text in the New Revised Standard Version (our pew Bibles) reads: "*Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.*"

The NET and the NIV say: "My blessing is on those people who trust in me, who put their *confidence* in me."

The NLT: "But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their *hope and confidence.*"

Hopefully the developing pattern is becoming evident: trust, confidence, and hope are closely related; and realistically, we expect something to happen; so it motivates our behavior. In contrast, dreaming motivates, well, wishing.

And Jeremiah contrasts hope in human effort versus accomplishment and hope in God. Easy to say. Right?

Your future depends upon whether you are dreaming or hoping. Are you wishing that life were different? Do you wish you had a different career, wish you were in a healthier relationship or wish you were trim and fit? What will your life will look like one year from now, five years, ten years from now if you keep dreaming but don't take any action? How will you feel?

To hope is to believe there is a real possibility that certain things can and will happen. It means believing they can happen because you invested your time, energy and passion toward making them happen. The problem with dreaming is that you are spending all of your life thinking about what you want but never actually doing anything to make it happen. Hoping is being proactive about your future, it is desire combined with discipline. Again: easy to say.

Dreaming has its place and can be magical...tossing pennies into fountains, reading fairy tales and bedtime stories, but do you really want to dream your life away? What do you want to accomplish that you haven't begun? Find out what knowledge, training or steps you need to take to be in your dream career, or to

make your relationship that ideal about which you dream; or to obtain whatever goal you have. Time is going to pass, that's a given. If you do nothing but dream, nothing will change. Ten years from now is going to come whether you do nothing or start taking action.

That's the difference between dreaming and hoping. A dream is something you desire to come true but has no *necessary* basis in reality. It's passive and can lead to frustration and even depression. Hoping, on the other hand, is having a desire with real expectation; and the language—the vocabulary—in today's text from Jeremiah suggests the bridge between the two is trust. Where is your trust?

And Jeremiah says "Blessed are those whose trust—or confidence—whose *hope* the Lord is." It's a proactive thing. It's a relationship that grows as we respond to the Lord's grace, reaching out to us—offering to make us what we dream of being—giving us gifts of ministry and service with which we can become partners with God as we know God in Christ.

I don't know how your life falls apart; I don't know: maybe you've got it all together. Every time I think I get it all together, I forget where I put it. What I know is that my own life is more productive, there's more joy and less stress and anxiety in my life and my relationships when I have been proactive in my relationship with the Lord—when my confidence and trust and hope the Lord is.

That's the only consistent way I know to move from dreaming to hope to fulfillment.