

‘What we learnt at the Space Academy’
Fusion Wheatley Summer Club Celebration Service
St. Mary’s Church of England & Wheatley URC
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Think back on what we’ve learnt about different people and about God through the stories we listened to this past week. What do you remember—what were some of the themes?

We talked about Daniel—a man who believed in God, was faithful. He prayed three times a day, and trusted God to guide his thoughts and his life. In the stories we heard about Daniel, we learned that he had a very special gift. Does anyone remember what it was? He had the ability to interpret other peoples’ dreams. In particular, Daniel was good at interpreting the scary dreams that a couple different kings had. The dreams they had didn’t have pleasant messages, and it took quite a bit of courage for Daniel to be honest with the kings about what their dreams meant . . . but the leaders realised that he was being honest and that he was right in what he was saying. Daniel’s wisdom made him quite powerful, and the leaders came to really trust him.

Daniel knew that his power to interpret those dreams didn’t come from himself, though. How do we know that—what did Daniel do that showed us he trusted in someone else more than his own understanding or wisdom? He prayed three times a day, and he kept a strict diet—he followed the teachings of his Jewish tradition, which meant that he paid attention and learned about how to live a life that was connected to God. This got him into trouble with some of the other guys he worked with, but he didn’t let it stop him.

Sometimes, people today think that the stories of the Bible are so ancient, so remote from our own modern-day experience, that they’re largely irrelevant. Lots of people think that the Bible doesn’t really have anything to teach us, and so they just ignore it or think it’s an old book not worth reading. And that’s a little bit understandable—it can be hard to relate to a story about a man who interprets the dreams of powerful rulers, much less know how it has anything to say to our own personal lives today. Some of the other things about those stories also seem like they would never happen today, too—or, if someone told us they had happened, we’d think they were mentally unstable. So it’s not hard to see why lots of people just dismiss the Bible as being irrelevant. But I think that’s just giving up too easily and not trying to see what the deeper message and truth embedded in the stories might be.

This past week, there were celebrations for the 50th anniversary of a very famous speech given by a man named Martin Luther King, Jr. Does anyone remember what the speech was called? “I have a dream.” MLK very famously said in that speech that he had a dream of a day when people would be judged not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. He dreamed of a day when his children could play with kids of other races and backgrounds without feeling afraid or different or diminished in any way. He dreamed of a day when everyone was treated equally, where people were honoured and worth of honour, and where everyone felt valued—loved by God, and respected by their neighbour. He was interpreting and also talking about not just his own

dreams, but the dreams of many people who were being oppressed and treated badly, as well as the dreams of people who knew things just weren't right.

MLK saw that there were so many people who were living bad dreams, and he dreamed aloud of better days. He saw and articulated the dream of God, and it's a *good* dream, a powerful dream. It was and is a divine dream to bring hope and healing and wholeness to the world. It's the dream that God has always had for this world, since the very beginning—but human beings just haven't figured out yet how to get over our fear and jealousy and greed and selfishness enough to let God's love just pour out of us and into the whole world. We haven't learned yet how to trust in the LORD with all our heart. We still rely too much on what we think we know!

Think about *your own* dreams. What are your dreams today? So much of the world around us tells us that we should dream about having a bigger or nicer house, more things—more toys or money or friends or fame, a sexier body, a more glamorous job, more power or influence in the world. But you know what people who get these things ultimately discover? None of them—not even all of them combined—can make us truly and deeply happy for the rest of our lives. And that dream—the dream of deep contentment and happiness and fulfilment—that is the dream that every single person has at the core of their being; it's the dream that all the other dreams are trying to drive toward.

The only thing that can make us happy in a lasting sort of way is living God's way—the way of love: the way that practices kindness, goodness, generosity, honesty, and mercy. It's quite opposite to what the world teaches, but I haven't met a single person (and I bet you haven't either) who lives with these core values, who doesn't feel very rich and deeply happy.

Our memory verse for the week was: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember God in everything you do. And God will show you the way to go.” (Prov. 3:5-6) These two verses pack a big punch, and they offer a big challenge to us: “Trust in the Lord God with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know.” What would it look like for you to “Remember God in everything you do.” Think about that for a moment. . . remember God, remember love and the creator of the entire universe, in everything you do. . . The verse concludes, “And he/God will show you the way to go.” If we think about God, if we remember and try to share the amazing power and grace of God's love in everything we do, then we will know the right way to go!

If we do those things, we will also be helping God's good dream for the entire world to become a reality. The bad dreams that some people and corrupt rulers want to impose on the world may be what get the headlines. But the real power of God is revealed when we overcome meanness and evil with love and **goodness, kindness, generosity, honesty, and mercy**. And that's the power that prevails in the long run; love always wins.

In our daily drama, the baddie 'Odor' discovered just how lonely life might be for someone who doesn't trust in God, or live in God's way. He discovered that making life miserable for others isn't that enjoyable in a lasting sort of way, and he saw that people who cared for each other and practised forgiveness and gratitude and kindness actually seemed to be finding the happiness he was longing for. In the final scene, he asked if he could join the crew of the Spaceship Wheatley—he

recognised how important it was to be part of a community. And this is what churches are good for. We get together every week in order to support and strengthen each other, because living with faith can be a real challenge—and we need to encourage each other. It takes work, and it requires learning and practise. In a world where so many people don't live by the values of goodness, kindness, generosity, honesty, and mercy, it's really helpful to participate in a community that is committed to trying hard to embody those things every day. And where we know we can get forgiveness and encouragement to keep trying when we do mess up, because all of us do, and we will sometimes.

Our Bible stories across the week also emphasised the importance of community and friends in faith to help us feel supported—Daniel had his human friends; he also had a great friend in God. His human friends were visible, and he talked with them—and they probably shared God's wisdom with him, even if they didn't know they were doing it. And Daniel also talked regularly with God, and trusted that the way of Love would be revealed to him when he had some challenging moments. When he got stuck or confused, he knew he could talk with his friends who also loved God, and they'd be able to help him figure it out.

Like Daniel, like Martin Luther King, Jr., and like all of the brave and faithful women and men across history and throughout the stories of the Bible and all those we have known in our personal lives—you and I are invited to trust in God more than we trust in what we think we know. If we remember that God is with us in every time and every place, and if we do our best to live in the presence of that love and peace and share it with everyone around us, then we will be living the dream that really brings true joy and ultimate satisfaction, because we will be living with God every day. Amen.