

## A Sermon by Canon Maggie Guite

Easter Day 2019

Luke 24.1-12

Are we all 'living the dream'? The world we live in sets great store by having hopes and dreams to motivate us: there's a certain kind of movie, often for family viewing, which tells us in a heart-warming way that *anyone* - the little guy, the one who has a tough start in life, for example - can achieve their hopes and dreams if they show enough determination and the right kind of character. *'Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow, till you find your dream...'*

And, of course, advertisers like to use the idea of 'dreams', too – dream kitchens, dream cars, dream holidays, dream weddings, dream homes - you name it, they can dream it up to sell you something!

Well, just to put a bit of a damper on things, I think it's true to say that by the time your hair's begun to turn grey, you've pretty much discovered that life isn't quite like that. You've come to terms with the fact that things don't always turn out perfect, that you can still burn the dinner even in your 'dream kitchen', you can get a jippy tummy on your 'dream holiday', and that your 'dream wedding' can go horribly wrong. Pity the Canadian couple who paid thousands of pounds for a special ceremony in a Scottish Castle recently, but

found when they came over that the company which owned the castle had gone bust. But, however frustrated, people learn get over disappointed dreams like this, with realism and a sense of humour. (I believe that Canadian couple de-camped to Gretna Green for their special ceremony, and they're now touring the Highlands, so they can take home some positive memories of how beautiful Scotland is.)

But when we speak of broken dreams, we can be speaking of something much, much worse than this kind of thing. What if it's about losing someone or something into which you've poured your heart and soul, your love, all your efforts, your whole life? The child who dies too young, the partner who never lives to share that retirement you'd planned together, the job, the business, the project which you'd thrown your everything into ...? The cause or hope you'd identified with and really trusted, which has let you down? What if your dreams run slap-bang into a brick wall, and there's no way out, only overwhelming grief about what might have been, and sheer loss of what you had?

When Jesus was so cruelly crucified his followers' dreams were totally shattered. Dreams that had been built up over three years by the evidence of their eyes and the warming of their hearts: dreams of a kingdom coming where the sick and disabled would be made well, the poor would find dignity and worth, the hungry would be fed, those who were despised would be

included, and people with guilty consciences would know what it was to be forgiven and set free. I don't know if the disciples had very clear and precise dreams about the shape of things to come, but they'd seen and heard enough of things like this happening to feel that when Jesus came to Jerusalem something tremendous would happen to make all it true and permanent. But, as we know, it all ended with that terrible day when Jesus was tortured to death, and his closest disciples slipped away into hidden places, in fear for their own lives. Only Jesus' women friends remained around to see him die and be buried; and with him were buried their dreams, too, of love, acceptance and true dignity.

These were the same women who came to his tomb on the Sunday morning, who saw strange things through the tears in their eyes. An open tomb, where a great stone should have been; an empty space where they'd seen his dear body laid less than two days ago; and dazzling figures, with strange, counter-intuitive words: *'Why do you look for the living among the dead?'* (Luke 24.5) Was this a dream? The male disciples certainly thought so, when the women went back and told them. And yet, and yet... It was enough to make Peter break out of hiding, and run to the tomb to see for himself.

And we all know now the story went on – if not in every detail of the days which followed these strange events. Enough happened, and kept happening, to convince them that Jesus was – and is still!– alive, and that the

dream of the kingdom they had previously held wasn't dead, but projected onto a much broader canvas than they'd ever imagined. It was their task, now, to take that dream of how things should and will be out to all the world, way beyond Jerusalem; with God's help to make the signs of the kingdom real wherever they could, and to share with everyone the hope that one day we shall all see Jesus. This will be beyond the horizon of history and our own lives as we know them – but in that seeing of him, all the fragments of our shattered dreams and of the dreams of his kingdom, will be gathered up, mended and set right, while all the tawdry substitutes we took for real dreams will be set aside and forgiven - if we can let them go

This is what we celebrate at Easter: broken dreams being taken up into a new and much bigger dream, which we can all share in and live towards. It's a wonderful message, which helps us see all our hopes and dreams – as well as our disappointments, griefs and losses – in the transforming and healing light of hope.

So, back to the question: Are we living the dream? - And is it his dream – or ours?