

BETWEEN THE DREAMING AND THE COMING TRUE

PEARLS

The cheerful girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. With her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them: a circle of glistening white pearls in a pink foil box. "Oh please, Mummy. Can I have them? Please, Mummy, please!"

Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face. "A dollar ninety-five. That's almost \$ 2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away and you might get another crisp dollar bill from Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out 17 pennies. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores and she went to the neighbour and asked Mrs McJames if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another new dollar bill and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace.

Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere – Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bubble bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night when he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Do you love me?"

"Oh yes, Daddy. You know that I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess – the white horse from my collection. The one with the pink tail. Remember, Daddy? The one you gave me. She's my favourite."

"That's ok, Honey, Daddy love you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss.

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Do you love me?"

"Daddy, you know I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my baby doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is so beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper."

"That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you." And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian-style. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek. "What is it Jenny? What's the matter?" Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, Daddy. It's for you." With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's kind daddy reached out with one hand to take the dime store necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He had had them all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the dime store stuff so he could give her genuine treasure.

So much like our heavenly Father.

I love that story and I never tire of reading it. I think it is a story that contains some deep truths, one of those truths is maybe this: there are times when we live between the dreaming and the coming true. Her father has genuine pearls he wants to give to her, and until she gives him her cheap pearls, he lives between the dreaming and the coming true. Perhaps its true to say that most of life is lived between the dreaming and the coming true.

As a baby we learn and grow by watching others. One of the delights of being a parent of a baby is to watch them grow and do new things. The desire to crawl becomes so strong that babies go to great efforts to make it happen – and we love to watch. We dream of that moment. Perhaps for babies it is very much an unconscious desire, but a desire nevertheless.

Once we crawl, we dream of standing – to get those things that are now only just out of reach. We graduate to being a toddler who dreams of getting into

everything. When we are young we dream of being older: we're not 7 we are nearly 8! We dream, when we are young, of those things that are just out of reach: riding a bike, walking to school on our own, staying up late! As we grow we begin to have bigger dreams. We dream that one day school will be over. We dream of the freedom we'll have at college or university. We dream about passing our driving test and being able to go where we want, whenever we want.

Perhaps we dream of finding a boyfriend or girlfriend – someone who will be special. Perhaps too, we dream of getting married and having a family of our own. We dream of having our own house where we set the rules and live in the way that suits us. We dream of having a job or career that we enjoy and find satisfying. We dream of holidays and adventures and projects.

Perhaps as we get older we dream of slowing down a bit, working part time. Perhaps too there comes a time when we dream of retirement. Perhaps when we're older we dream of when we were younger and that if we did it again we might do it differently. Most of life, it seems, in one way or another, is lived between the dreaming and the coming true.

Sometimes it's a very long time between the dreaming and the coming true. Sometimes it's the dreaming of it coming true that holds us and enables us to keep going. When Abram was 75 years old something remarkable happened. When he was 75 years old, God spoke to Abram and told him to leave the place of his birth and the country where he had lived his whole life... and to go to a place that God would show him.

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12 v 1-3)

By any stretch of the imagination, that's a big ask. To be asked to leave everything you know, everything you own and everyone you know and to go somewhere else, is a big ask. But God gave Abram a promise: that he would be the father of a great nation and that all people would be blessed through him. Which was an odd promise to give to a man who was 75 and without a son! But Abram went – he left his home for a land that God would show him.

Abram finds himself living between the dreaming and the coming true. God has given a promise and yet nothing seems to have happened. God reminds Abram of the promise...

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,
your very great reward”

² But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.
(Genesis 15 v 1-6)

But Abram, desperate for the promise to come true, takes things into his own hands. Sarah's servant Hagar bears him a son. Ishmael when Abram is 86 years old. But Ishmael is not the promise of God. Abram still lives between the dreaming and the coming true. When Abram is 99 God comes again to Abram and changes his name.

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God. (Genesis 17 v 1-8)

The name Abram meant ‘Exalted Father’. His new name, the name God gives him, is Abraham, which means ‘Father of a multitude.’ And God tells Abraham that Sarah will give birth to Isaac. Abraham has lived between the dreaming and the coming true. Sarah gave birth to a son, and Abraham gave him the name Isaac, and perhaps, in part, the dream had happened.

Abraham never lived to see Isaac’s son Jacob or the great multitude that would become the nation of Israel. And in truth, God’s promise to Abraham was far more than his being the physical father of a nation of people. He was to be the father of those who live by faith – a multitude that according to Revelation will be too numerous to count.

Abraham lived between the dreaming and the coming true, and those who followed Abraham lived between the dreaming and the coming true. Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, David, Daniel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah all lived between the dreaming and the coming true.

These people, the names we know so well and whose stories we can read, all lived, in one way or another, extraordinary lives. All of them were used by God. Joseph boasted about his dream, got sold by his brothers, and ended up in Egypt. He got into trouble and out of trouble, but it turned out he was right about his extraordinary dreams all along – and God used him to save his people. Some of his dreams came true, literally, but Joseph still lived between the dreaming and the coming true, because the story was not over.

Moses led the people in their escape from Egypt in the most extraordinary way; from a burning bush, to ten plagues, to an escape across a sea on dry ground. He led the people in the desert for forty years where the food never

ran out and their clothes never wore out – but he never entered the Promised Land. Moses lived between the dreaming and the coming true – because the story was not over.

Joshua won extraordinary battles to possess The Promised Land, but he too lived between the dreaming and the coming true because the story was not over... God was still keeping the dream alive.

Friends, it seems to me that we, followers of Christ, are in good company. Not only do we share with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Joshua, Gideon, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, David, Daniel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, that we live between the dreaming and the coming true, but we share with Peter, Paul, John, Lydia, Mary, Joseph...the list goes on. As followers of Christ we live between the dreaming and the coming true.

Most of our lives are lived between the dreaming and the coming true, in life we have all sorts of dreams; some of them come to pass and most probably some of them don't. Sometimes, too, God gives us promises and sometimes those promises require us to wait, and in that sense, we live between the dreaming and the coming true. Maybe that's true for you right now in these moments. You are waiting, living between the dreaming and the coming true.

You are in good company, and we all live between the dreaming and the coming true in the bigger and far better story of God's magnificent love, because the story is not over... God is keeping the dream alive. God's dream is to know and be known by those he created. God's dream is that he will know and be known by you and God is keeping his dream alive.

When Adam and Eve fall for the flattery of the evil one in the garden, God did not let go of his dream, he chose Abraham, an old, childless man, and Sarah an old childless wife to be the start of something great. Through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he chose the nation of Israel. He loved and wooed and rescued and fed and guided and led the people he loved, to show them the extent of his love. Through leaders and kings and judges and prophets, God was keeping his dream alive.

And then, one day, the words all heaven had been waiting for, rang out across the universe. To a young Jewish man who was told to take Mary home as his wife; to a young Jewish girl pledged to be married to a young Jewish man; to Magi from the East; to a bunch of shepherds on a hill keeping watch over their flocks by night...all of heaven was waiting to hear the words – Christmas is on!

The birth of a tiny baby, God's own son, who was given the name Immanuel because it means 'God with us.' The birth of a tiny baby – God's own son, who was given the name Jesus because he came as the Saviour of the people. God was keeping his dream alive. Jesus is part of God's bigger and better story – he is keeping the dream alive, but the story is not over. And, friends, the truth of God's bigger and better story is that the best is yet to come! Friends, we live between the dreaming and the coming true.

At our Christmas dinner table this year we lit five candles before we sat down to eat. We lit those candles to remember those in our family who have died – two in 2021, but others as well. I was reminded of hearing my mum telling me that there was a bigger and better story and that she longed to live fully in that story. She did not use those words, but what she meant was, she knew that when she died, the best was still to come. To be honest, her life was tough, full of tragedy and challenges. She chose to follow God and she dared to live between the dreaming and the coming true as best she knew how.

Friends, we have all experienced, in the last two years, immense challenges. Many, many of us have suffered the death of a loved one – sometimes in very challenging circumstances. We've experienced many losses – from the loss of freedom to perhaps the loss of confidence in the world. For no-one, has life been easy.

We now stand at the beginning of 2022 wondering what it will bring. My best guess is that it will bring its share of challenges, both large and small, and no doubt there will be a few curve balls in there too. Perhaps we have dreams for this New Year, perhaps we are living between the dreaming and the coming true in that sense. There is a deep truth that we would do well to hold onto as we enter the New Year of 2022 it is - that we are living between the dreaming and the coming true of God's bigger and better story...the story of God's magnificent love.

To help us, we are going to study together part of God's book that is about living between the dreaming and the coming true. We will look together at the Psalms of Ascent (120-134) that have been used by the people of God as they follow him in life. It will take a while – but that's ok! And my prayer is that they help to hold us, and keep us, and help us to live well between the dreaming and the coming true.

And just one final thought. The little girl had cheap pearls, her dad had the finest pearls that he was longing to give her, but she had to give up the cheap

pearls for him to give her genuine pearls. The little girl's dad was living between the dreaming and the coming true. He was waiting with great love.

I wonder if your heavenly father is watching you and living between the dreaming and the coming true... waiting with great love to give you his very best in 2022.

Between the dreaming and the coming true...how will you respond?

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