

“The Hammer of Hope”

Advent 1, Nov 27, 2016:



“They shall beat their swords into plowshares... and their spears into pruning hooks.”
Isaiah 2:45



There is little doubt in my mind, that Isaiah’s Text was written in the style of great rhetorical oratory.

Isaiah begins his prophecy with a speech; he’s preaching, he’s trying to make a point; actually, as I see it, he’s making three points.

His first point is, “*I had this dream!*”

“Hear the word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

His listeners hear it, but Isaiah saw it.

“Hear the word... that I saw,”
is the intro to Isaiah’s speech.



Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream!" speech at the 1963 Washington D.C. Civil Rights March.

Dr. King's historical speech is known to have had several versions written at several different times. It has no single version... but is an amalgamation of several drafts, titled, *"Normalcy, Never Again."*

The title, *"I Have a Dream,"* came after its delivery. Near the end the African American gospel songstress, Mahalia Jackson, called out to Dr. King from the crowd,



Tell them about the dream, Martin. Tell them about the dream, brother.

Dr. King stopped delivering his prepared speech, and started preaching, punctuating his points with,

"I have a dream." "I have a dream."

"I have a dream... one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

"I have a dream... that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will no longer be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

"I have a dream... one day, on the red hills of GA, the sons of former slaves & those of former slave owners will sit together at a table of brotherhood."

"This is our hope. This is the faith I will take back to the South with me; with this faith, we'll be able to hew from mountains of despair a stone of hope ...to make justice real for all of God's children."

Then there is Nellie McClung born in Chatsworth half a cy earlier - in 1873 - into a Methodist family, in 1880 all moving west to homestead in Manitoba, growing up to be a Teacher, Author, Social Activist.

Moving to Edmonton in 1914, she continued to speak out for women's suffrage - the vote - and was elected to the AB Legislature in 1921.



But there was still one more hurdle to leap over:
 “The BNA Act,” which unequivocally described
 persons who could be appointed to the Senate
 with pronouns “*he or him,*” never “*she or her.*”

When several ‘otherwise eligible females’
 were passed over for less qualified males,
 she and four other women took it to Court.

The case thrown out by Canadian courts,
 they took it to the British Supreme Court.
 In 1929, the Judge decided in their favour.
 Women were declared as “persons” in law.



And this brings us to Isaiah’s second point,
 his dream - his vision - is hope for everyone:
 From all nations, people shall come and say,

*“Come, let us go up to Yahweh,
 that he may teach us his ways
 and that we may walk in his paths.”*



King’s, “*Justice for all of God’s Children,*”
 and McClung’s, “*All person under the Law,*”
 echo with Isaiah’s, “*People from all nations.*”

Which takes us to Isaiah’s 3rd point, “*It will take effort.*”



*“They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
 and their spears into pruning hooks;
 nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
 neither shall they learn war any more.*

One could hardly review the century that passed between Lincoln's "Declaration of Emancipation," and King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech and say,



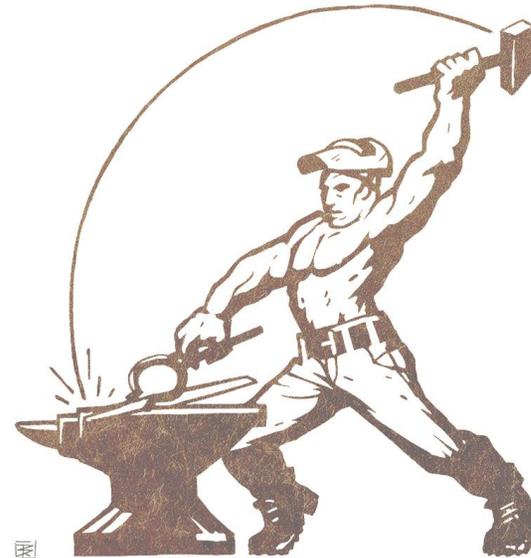
*no price was paid, no blood poured out,
no tears were shed or any miles walked,
to bring his dream to its fruition, to make it happen.*

Being a devout Methodist, after 1925 a UCC member, Nellie McClung was once asked about her "theology."

"I've never been much of a theologian," she replied, "Doctrinal discussions have a mouldy taste, dusty to the palate. I believe we all know enough to live by. It isn't so much spiritual food we need, as spiritual exercise. But I love Scripture for its music, beauti-

fully phrased. The words of Christ have the power to set the bells in my heart ringing. I long to know the mind of Christ. What was Jesus thinking when he cut short Peter's protestations of love, by saying, 'Feed my lambs?' A slogan for all of us to take from his lips - three words of action. It is not, 'Chant my praises,' 'Defend my theories' or 'Kill my enemies,' No! No! - but a greater, better, lovelier task, 'Feed my lambs'"

"O Israel... all you who are ready to struggle, to wrestle, to work, with God; come let us walk in the light of God."



(keep banging the anvil)

Amen.