

Thanksgiving Reflection 2007

Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Joel 2: 38

When we at RCFM were thinking about how to close out our year, we realized that we had not held a worship service of praise and thanksgiving for our nearly miraculous, and, God willing, conclusive victory on June 14th. And a service in the Thanksgiving season seemed more than appropriate. So, here we are.

With a little distance on the struggle for marriage equality, I found myself meditating and praying about the movement in terms of the whole sweep of salvation history. I recalled the Israelites and their long quest for freedom and identity. I thought about the prophets and their deep insights about social injustice and oppression, and their calls for righteousness and liberation. I thought about Jesus, the Nazarene.

And then I thought about the Europeans who ventured here, whose equivocal enterprise we remember this week, the Pilgrims and Puritans who believed they were establishing a new kingdom of God in this new Promised Land. I recalled the movement for the abolition of slavery and the long and ongoing struggle for the civil rights of women and African Americans. I considered the question of immigration, which I've heard called "the new gay marriage" in terms of national controversy, polarization, the political third rail.

And I saw, in a kind of dream vision of my own, all of these events, these movements, as part of one large movement, a sweep, indeed, of salvation history. So the questions are, what have we been saved from? What are we being saved for? What are we moving from, and what are we moving toward?

There's no one answer. We can say that we are being saved from oppression, from injustice, from imprisonment, from blindness and ignorance and fear. We are moving out of, moving away from, those captivities : moving toward justice, freedom, and peace.

What we are moving out of, moving away from, is also what we are being saved from. And so also, what we are moving toward is what we are being saved for; we are being saved for liberty, for equality, and for loving-kindness.

But above and beyond all that, I believe, is that we are being saved for *wholeness*. As I reflected upon my dream vision and upon the outcome – the ongoing outcome- of all of these movements for human liberation, it seemed to me that what we are working and moving toward in this great sweep of salvation history is wholeness. We are being saved so that we may, each and all of us, become more integrated, more whole, more complete, that we may become most fully who we are in our personal and family lives, in our worship lives, and in our citizenship.

All the testimony I've heard over the years during the marriage movement amounts to this: people feel more fully themselves, more completely human. And people aren't talking only about their status legally or in society, as I understand it, they are talking about their sense of themselves as more fully accepted and self- accepting in their entire being.

Surely this was true of the Israelites as they founded their own society and religious practices in the Promised Land, surely it was true of the Jesus Movement, and of those Europeans who settled North America, of the former slaves and those newly enfranchised in the 20th century. We are being saved into fuller humanity, step by step, movement by movement.

I would also say, as I do so often from this pulpit, that this salvation is not an individual or personal matter. Each of us may feel the benefits and blessings of advancing equality and liberation in a personal and individual way, but that is not the story. The story is the salvation of all of God's people – and we are all, I believe, God's people. The wholeness I'm talking about is the wholeness – the healing – of the whole people of God, that is, of the whole world.

It's not simply individual couples and families who have become more whole through marriage equality, it's all of us. I know this as keenly as I know anything: because of marriage equality my own marriage is more whole, my community of faith is more whole, and our Commonwealth is more whole. For this, I give thanks and praise.

Moreover, our movement has been, by and large, a victimless victory. We did not smite Canaanites to achieve marriage equality, or slaughter Native Americans, or fight a civil war. Those who consider themselves victims of our success are, in my view, victims of their own flawed ideology, and they are going to have to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling.

I believe I speak for all of us in The Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry when I say what a great privilege and honor it has been to participate in this movement. I

said earlier that our victory on June 14 was nearly miraculous; what feels far more miraculous is to have something that seemed, 10 years ago, to be not only a vision and a dream, but a *pipe* dream, has come to pass in our lifetime. Surely, God's justice is alive and at work in the world, and surely we are being saved to carry it on. Praise be to God!

Amen.