

## “REALISTS AND DREAMERS”

by

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August 1, 2010

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, 27-31a

Today I invite you to consider the way in which some of us tend to focus on what is real, while others of us tend to focus on what is possible. To use Karl Jung’s terms, some of us are “sensing” type people, while others of us are “intuiting” type people.

Sensing type people give primary importance to their senses, to what they can see, and hear and taste and smell and touch. They are concerned with data and the use of data and the conclusions which can be drawn from data.

The disciple Thomas, was a sensing type person. When other disciples came to Thomas indicating excitedly that Jesus had been raised from the dead, doubting, data-conscious Thomas said that he would believe that when he could see in Jesus’ hands the scar from the nails and touch the spear wound in Jesus’ side.

Sergeant Joe Friday, the detective on that ancient TV program, “Dragnet,” was a sensing type person. His oft-repeated line was, “The facts, ma’am, just the facts.”

Intuiting type people, on the other hand, give primary importance to their mental vision, to what they can conceive and imagine and envision as possibilities.

Caleb was an intuiting type person. He was one of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to reconnoiter the Promised Land in advance of the Israelite attempt to take possession of it. The other eleven all seem to have been sensing types. When they came back from the reconnaissance, the eleven all advised that the attempt at settlement not be made. They talked about how forbidding the land was and how huge the inhabitants were by comparison with themselves. But Caleb had a vision and intuition of success. He said impatiently, “Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome them.”

Admiral David Glasgow Farragut was one of those intuiting types who was as disdainful of data as Caleb was. When some sensing type sailor pointed out to him on August 5, 1864, at the battle of Mobile Bay, how heavy the enemy firepower was, he said, “Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!”

Martin Luther King, Jr., made one of the greatest intuiting speeches of all time. Despite all of the realities which seemed to promise a continuation of racial separation and conflict, he spoke stirringly from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial of the “dream” of equality and freedom which called him on.

Now, the problem is that some of us intuiting types have great dreams, but we are short on effective action.

Brother Dave Gardner was a southern stand-up comedian back in the 60s and 70s. He once described two fellows on a construction job in the hot summer sun. One of them is sitting on this bulldozer under an umbrella with his feet propped up, gazing off into the distance. He says, “Someday I’m gonna own this

construction company; gimme another drink of water.” This other little guy is down in this ditch digging. He comes early and leaves late, cause he just digs digging. Ten years pass. The little ditch digger is living in a mansion with gold-plated bathroom fixtures and a Mercedes-Benz in the driveway. And out on the construction job there’s that other fellow sitting on the bulldozer under the umbrella with his feet propped up, saying to himself, “Someday I’m gonna own this construction company.”

The intuiting types are often much more enthusiastic and energetic and attractive than that bulldozer operator, but they can be just as neglectful of reality. I remember a May meeting of our Peninsula Clergy Association in Newport News at which Avi Raich, our delightful and visionary program chairman said to the assembled group, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could all get together informally for a picnic instead of a program next month? How many of you think it would be a good idea to have a picnic on June 24<sup>th</sup>? Let’s see your hands.” Twenty-four hands went up. “Great!” he said, “The 24<sup>th</sup> it is.” Now, I happen to be a sensing type person. I said, “Avi, I think you ought to find out who will *come* to the picnic on the 24<sup>th</sup>.” He seemed a little puzzled. In his mind he was already seeing a lively group of twenty-four plus their families enjoying the fellowship at Deer Park. Reluctantly, he responded and asked for a show of hands of those who would come. Six hands went up. A vision of a picnic and an actual event with participants are two different things.

Intuiting type people often join churches or other organizations with appealing images of what it is going to be like and what it is going to mean to them. And after nine months or a year they are feeling disappointed. It is not turning out the way they expected. Why? Because in most cases they had not ever embarked upon a realistic course of action to bring the attractive possibilities to fulfillment. It was a dream without effective action.

In Luke 14:28 Jesus asks, “Which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” The answer is that too many of us simply launch out on faith. But James reminds us pointedly that faith without works is dead.

Intuiting types have great dreams but are sometimes short on effective action. We sensing types, on the other hand, are great doers; but we are sometimes short on vision. We can get so involved in *what* we are doing that we sometimes lose sight of *why* we are doing it.

When Joab, commander of Israel’s army, needed to get an important message from the battlefield back to King David in Jerusalem, two runners were available, Ahimaaz and Cush. They both took off. Ahimaaz put everything he had into the run and arrived far in advance of Cush. The only problem was that he forgot the message he was supposed to deliver. Cush soon arrived and related clearly the message from the battlefield. Ahimaaz could not remember *while* he was running *why* he was running.

If the family is getting ready to go on a vacation trip or outing and one of the parents is a strong sensing type person, he or she may have the others so conscious of the schedule they are going to follow and what they are going to take and how it’s going to be packed in the car that the anticipation of the adventure ahead begins to get smothered by all of the organization.

Leaders of organizations, including churches, can become so involved in the realities of various tasks that they lose sight of the goals toward which the tasks should be moving. Getting through the meeting efficiently can crowd out visioning. Getting through the lesson can become more important than the children, youth or adults for whom the lesson has been planned.

Now, each of us has an orientation either toward sensation or toward intuition, just as we are either left-handed or right-handed. So, it should be obvious that we need each other. Data-conscious people need people with vision. As dad barks out orders and packs the car, someone needs to be able to give him a hug and encourage him to ease up and smell the flowers. Dreamers, on the other hand, need people with their feet on the ground. If Jimmy is already in the car with his snorkeling gear, dreaming of the beach, and hollering impatiently, “C’mon, people, let’s go!” it is very good to have somebody in the family who can point out to him that his suitcase is still sitting in the hall.

Most civic clubs, such as Kiwanis or Rotary or Lions, have members who are dreamers and members who are realists. The dreamers are the ones who come up with new ideas and ambitious plans that capture the imaginations and stimulate the motivation of others. The realists are those who point out how much money there is in the treasury and what kind of organization and leadership would be required to turn these dreams into reality. The dreamers tend to see the realists as naysayers who are so stuck in the mud that they cannot go anywhere. The realists tend to see the dreamers as cheerleaders whose heads are so far up in the clouds that they have lost touch with the way things are and with the way things work. The truth is that each group would be seriously disadvantaged without the other. Dreamers give realists vision and inspiration. Realists give dreamers the facts and data which are necessary for bringing a vision to fruition.

I am struck by the consistent way in which our Lord, Jesus Christ, held dreams and realities together. He held on to a clear vision of the life to which God had called him, a life of obedience to the will of God and of balanced love for himself and for others. And he steadfastly acted in ways which were consistent with that vision even when it cost him dearly. He could see that the crown which God had in store for him could be had only at the price of a cross.

His disciples could not accept that at first. They wanted the fulfillment of the dream without the hardship and pain which was required. After Jesus’ resurrection, however, they were empowered by his living Spirit to follow his example. We will be also, if we allow that Spirit to live and work within us.

We will have, not only a dream of success in our vocation, but a capacity for the sustained hard work which is necessary for the dream to become a reality. We will dig diligently rather than sit daydreaming on the bulldozer.

We will have, not only a dream of a fulfilling marriage and family life, but an understanding and acceptance of the fidelity, the commitment, the presence and the capacity for give and take which are required to achieve that.

We will have, not only the dream of a spiritual foundation which will sustain us if we are dealt some massive blow in life; we will have, as well, the discipline needed to build that foundation through worship and participation in the Body of Christ.

We will have, not only the dream of living in a city made increasingly attractive by its unity and its aspirations; we will find, as well, some way or ways in which we can make a personal contribution to the realization of that dream.

We have visionaries among us at Williamsburg Presbyterian Church who want us to keep our sights on *why* we are here doing what we are doing: “We gather in the name of Jesus Christ to worship God and by the

power of the Holy Spirit do God's work in the world." That vision will become a reality when the doers among us embrace it and do *what* is necessary with our time, energy, talents and money to make it so.

A few members of a little country church had a dream of acquiring a chandelier for their sanctuary. At a meeting where the matter was going to be voted on by the congregation, a no-nonsense farmer who had limited awareness of some of the niceties of life but who knew the value of hard-earned money weighed in on the matter. He said, "I'm opposed to buying a chandelier for three reasons. First, it costs too much money. Second, we don't have anybody in our church who knows how to play a chandelier. And third, what we really need here in this church is more light."

It appears that in the church at Corinth there were people who said, "What we really need around here is good preaching." Others said, "No, what we really need around here is good administration." Others said, "No, what we really need is more inspiration." And still others said, "What we really need is more loving and serving of one another." Paul wrote to them that all of those things were needed. He said that God intended some to be apostles, some prophets, some teachers, some workers of miracles, some healers, some administrators and some speakers in various kinds of tongues.

The bottom line is that dreamers need those people who can help turn their dreams into realities. Doers need people who can help them hold onto the vision which give their deeds direction and purpose. Architects need builders, builders need architects, and families and churches and cities and nations and the world need both.

#### PRAYER:

Dear God, we thank you for those visionaries in our human history who have been responsible for every advance we have made in the arts and sciences, and we thank you for those visionaries in your Church which have been responsible for our advances in theology and ethics. We confess that we have too often hindered this progress by our deep attachment to that with which we were comfortable.

We thank you, as well, for those realists among us who have refused to be swept away by pipe dreams. And we confess the times when we have ourselves acted on misguided impulses without thinking through what the consequences were going to be.

Lord, the truth is that we are too slow to act on the noble impulses which you stimulate within us, and we are too quick to act on the unworthy impulses which arise out of our own sinfulness.

We pray that you will not only forgive us but will enable us, with the help of your Spirit, to think and speak and act in ways which reflect the kind of purposefulness with which you call us to live.

We would not conclude our prayers this morning without holding up to you for comfort and strength those of our human brothers and sisters whose hopes and dreams have been dashed on hard rocks of adversity, those of our own church family who cannot now think much about the future because of the heavy demands of the present and those of our own flesh and blood who are so absorbed in running the race of life that they seem to have little time to reflect on why they are running.

We believe, dear God, that we can have no dream of life more promising than the one played out before us in Jesus; and we earnestly pray that you will enable us to manifest the commitment, the motivation, the self-discipline and the behavior which will bring that dream to reality in our own lives, for his sake.

Amen.