

Dreaming in Good Company

I have always believed that each of us receives God's unconditional love and forgiveness regardless of race, sexual preference, social status or failure to meet any of man's other arbitrary criteria for credibility. I do not need proof; I simply believe this to be true. As a Christian, I have struggled to express my worldview in a way that stands up to even moderate argumentation from Christians and non-Christians alike. That changed when I read Reverend Desmond Tutu's book, God Has a Dream: a vision of hope for our time. This book invigorates me and illustrates the hope I hold for humanity. It puts words to my worldview and gives me a credible authority to refer to. It is a special place I retreat to when my soul grows weary from the pain around us or when it becomes clouded by other things. God Has a Dream impacts my life by reinforcing my belief that we live in a moral universe, we are created to care for one another, and finally, that each of us is an agent of transformation in the world.

God Has a Dream is Reverend Tutu's testimony of faith and a message to us all that we should hold much hope for the world. Tutu was born in South Africa in 1931 and lived through the hatred and oppression created by apartheid. Frustrated by the inferior system of education for black students, Tutu left his teaching career to become a priest in the Anglican Church. For Tutu, driven to affect change in for his people, this was the beginning of a series opportunities to share his message of hope and equality. Later, as chair to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu counseled forgiveness and cooperation rather than seeking revenge for those accused of human rights violations during the 34 years of apartheid, further illustrating his commitment to transformation. While I do not agree with some of Tutu's views or with the use of the word "religion" (an establishment created by people) to describe faith (belief in spite of the lack of proof), this book has a very powerful message that Tutu has successfully put into practice.

I share Reverend Tutu's belief that we live in a moral universe. I firmly believe good will eventually prevail over evil. This is not merely optimism; good has conquered evil throughout history. Evil movements such as the holocaust, slavery and apartheid were all conquered because the oppressed and their supporters united to bring truth and goodness to the forefront. It is necessary for there to be both good and evil in the world. Tutu explains this by stating, "Our ability to do evil is part and parcel of our ability to do good. One is meaningless without the other." (13). There must be some bad in the world in order for us to truly understand goodness. The comparison cannot be made without the opposing forces. I share with Tutu faith in humankind and believe that because we all have the potential for goodness; everybody has the potential for transformation. As a moral universe, we were meant for and are capable of better.

Today's culture leads us to strive for individual success and independence. Our busy, scattered lives leave little time for sharing life and community. I believe we were created to live in community with one another. The African word, "ubuntu" is a word used to describe a mindset of interdependence and how that attitude impacts the world. The full extent of this idea is explained by Tutu as he describes those who possess a spirit of ubuntu by saying, "They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them." (26). This description paints a picture of a community whose deep care for others and interdependence is so ingrained that they are no longer spectators in the events around them, but active participants who are deeply affected by because how events impact others. It also illustrates that through community, we can be victorious over tribulation.

What would happen to racism, sexism, animal cruelty, war, gossip, terrorism, crime, and even destruction of our natural resources if we all lived our lives with an ubuntu-heart? The impact of living as if we were all interconnected could be phenomenal.

God Has a Dream assures me that I can make a difference in the world. Small efforts have a ripple effect that only God can fully see. Reverend Tutu refers to us as God's "indispensable agents of change." He urges us to; "not be daunted by the magnitude of the task before you" (62-2). We can create change regardless of our limitations and regardless of the magnitude of the problem. This book encourages me to continue my own efforts to make a difference. Transformation is transformation regardless of the size or impact. When added together, they are monumental.

There is no doubt that God Has a Dream has transformed my life. I better understand the emptiness that can only be filled by living a life of ubuntu. I try to live my life aware of those around me and aware of the impact my actions have on others. The concepts therein also empower me to, as Ghandi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Reverent Tutu, both by his words and by his example, helped me to realize that I have amazing potential to be the change Ghandi speaks of. I have been blessed by opportunities to extend my community beyond my town and even abroad. I humbly seek to serve and consider myself rich because I am blissfully interconnected. This is ubuntu. This is the dream I share with Desmond Tutu and with God.

Works Cited

Tutu, Desmond. God Has A Dream: a vision of hope for our time. New York: Doubleday, 2004.