

It's That Dream We Carry

Bill Eichhorn

August 21, 2022



(dream catcher)

Readings

Prayer

Open my eyes, Oh Lord,
that I better can gaze
upon the wonder, not only
its outer glaze.

It's the Dream

Olav Hauge

It's the dream we carry in secret
that something miraculous will happen,
that it must happen –
that time will open
that the heart will open
that doors will open
that the mountains will open
that springs will gush –
that the dream will open,
that one morning we will glide into
some little harbor we didn't know was there.

Our reading this morning, "Prayer," could very well be from a Mary Oliver poem, but it is a stanza from a poem by the Norwegian poet, Olav Hauge. The full poem is:

*New snow spreads its cloak
over the dark mountain.
This night sky opens doors to show
layer upon layer of blue.
Winter-stripped birches now wake
and new seedlings break soil.
A ripening autumn will sway
fields heavy with harvest.*

*Open my eyes, Oh Lord,
that I better may gaze
upon this marvel, not only
its outward glaze.
Till the last eve, fill my heart
with your song and embrace
– let breath and altar candle
together expire.*

Mary Oliver has been called the "Poet of Praise." Olav Hauge, one of the greatest Norwegian poets of the twentieth century, has been rightly called the poet of "Luminous Spaces." His poems, written with stunning clarity, draw our awareness to the ordinary, to the everyday, and in so doing renew for us the world we live in. Like Mary Oliver, he opens our eyes afresh. He speaks from a luminous place and invites us to enter.

There's the clarity.

*New snow spreads its cloak
over the dark mountain.
This night sky opens doors to show
layer upon layer of blue.*

There's the luminous place.

*Open my eyes, Oh Lord,
that I better may gaze
upon this marvel, not only
its outward glaze.
Till the last eve, fill my heart
with your song and embrace
– let breath and altar candle
together expire.*

Olav Hauge is a poet whose poems invite us to gaze at the world around us and be stunned by its beauty, its mystery, its preciousness – a poet who nudges us to ponder what it is we would like our lives, our hearts, to be filled with until we take our last breath. Is it the Divine Spirit’s song and embrace? If not that, then what?

I need poetry and poets like Olav Hauge to invite me to open my eyes to the miracle of life and not be overwhelmed by the depressing news of our day. I need poets who witness to the spiritual dimension to life and lead me to face those profound questions embedded deep in my soul. And, my friends, I need them every single day.

I discovered Olav Hauge recently when I was searching for a poem to be read at our grandson Jesse’s wedding. He lives in Norway with his partner Miriam and their two children, Jens and Maud, two greatgrandchildren we have met only by Zoom. I wanted a poem in Norwegian that might be read during the celebration.

A bit about this remarkable man. Olav Hauge was born in 1908 and led a mostly solitary life on a five-acre farm growing apples along the western coast of Norway. From his modest home he had a panoramic view where he could take in the many moods of the fjord and surrounding mountains. He traveled little, but acquired an impressive library to feed his literary appetite. He translated Shakespeare, Tennyson, Browning, Sylvia Plath and Robert Bly, among others, into Norwegian. When he was sixty-five, he married the Norwegian artist, Bodil Cappelin, whom he met at one of his rare public poetry readings. He died in 1994 at the age of 86 of natural causes. His poetry very much resembles the Zen and ancient Chinese poets, with its economy of words, its depth and clarity, as is evident in this poem, “Your Way.”

*No-one has marked out the road
you are to take
out in the unknown
out in the blue.
This is your road.
Only you
will take it. And there’s no
turning back.*

*And you haven’t marked your road
either.
And the wind smoothes out your tracks
on desolate hills.*

Olav Hauge suffered from schizophrenia, and at different times in his life spent a total of five years in a psychiatric hospital where he endured experimental drugs and electromagnetic shock treatments. One of his last poems, published after his death, is entitled “The Cell.”

*I belonged here.
Perhaps I always
longed for here.
A naked cell.
Worn floorboards
a heavy oak door
with a small slot.*

*Below the window
a radiator
encased in steel:
such a wondrous sound
when I beat it
and sang.*

*Strange marks on the wall
and letters scratched in stone.
Iron bars on the window,
but each day the sun came
and laid a golden slab
on the floor.
Here as well.*

As the poet reflected on those terrible, trying times, he found and gave witness to a luminous space, “the sun came and laid a golden slab” at his feet. I find this poem reveals his spiritual depth, his faith that even in the darkest places and times, there is a sun, a light, that illumines our situation, if we can but recognize it.

The Hauge poem I selected for Jesse and Miriam, “It Is That Dream,” turns out to be his most renowned and quoted poem. In the poem he speaks of a yearning we all share:

*It is the dream we carry
that something wonderful will happen,
that it must happen –
that time will open,
that our hearts may open,
that doors shall open,
and the mountains shall open
that springs will gush forth –
that our dream will open,
and that one morning we’ll glide
into a cove we didn’t know.*

The poem invites us, I believe, to trust that this dream we carry will one day come into being – that one morning after traveling far and through stormy seas we will find ourselves gliding into a cove we didn't know was there.

Here, Hauge speaks like the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of a dream to the Hebrew people living in exile, longing to go home:

A voice cries out:

*“In the wilderness, prepare the
way of the Lord,*

*make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill
be made low;*

*the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.”*

~ Isaiah 40:3-4

Dear friends, my question for us this morning is *how vivid is the dream we carry for this church community?* Are we discouraged about our future? Are we content to settle for what is, rather than embrace the dream that we can be more, that we can be a vital spiritual community offering in these precarious times a shining harbor where diversity is welcomed, where we unite people of conscience into a force for peace and justice? Do we hold the dream that we can bring forth a new and re-formed expression of church, of spiritual community?

Here's what I think. Given our history, given our unique brand of spirituality, given the place David Gregory has brought us to, and given our current leadership and membership – given all that, I believe we will be one of the faith communities that sheds the old forms of church life, that lets go of the practices that no longer serve. I believe we are positioned to be one of the faith communities to birth one of the new forms of Christianity that are surely coming. Like all birthing, this will be both painful and glorious. I want to urge those of us in this room and on Zoom to carry the dream that “something wonderful will happen to CCC, that it must happen.” I want us to allow that dream to infuse our relationships, to empower our actions, and to inspire us to become engaged in the life and work of CCC.

One day, my friends, something wonderful will happen to CCC, if we carry the dream forward, if we let our hearts open, if we allow new doors to open. If we let the dream guide us, it will happen and we will find ourselves one morning riding a wave into a cove, a harbor, we didn't know was there.