preaching to empower moral imagination
utopia and dystopia

preaching as science fiction
what problem is our preaching trying to solve?

- a failure of willpower?
- intelligence?
- information?
- character?
- leadership?
- effort?
- commitment?
what if our problem is a dome over our imagination?
“It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!” - Upton Sinclair
domes and abduction

kierkegaard and butt-kicking
Exile …
dry bones live
deserts bloom
exiles return
hearts of stone, heart of flesh
mourning into dancing
3 Minute Meeting:

What is a dome that limits our imagination today?
Religion as a dome …

Supremacy (white, Christian, human)
Liberal/Conservative
Orthodox/Heretic
Inerrancy
Patriarchy
Eschatology
imagining a world beyond the dome of white supremacy (1968)
a world beyond the dome of cold war: exploration, not exploitation
prime directive
family life in a strange new world ...
Imagine a different way to see the other

Woman caught in adultery
Good Samaritan
Ethiopian Eunuch
Cornelius the Unclean Gentile
All nations before the throne of the Lamb
3 Minute Meeting:

I would like to preach sermons to help people imagine getting beyond ...
preaching for recognition
Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.
preaching against denial
Slavery in Egypt
Occupation/Exile
Gehenna, Hades, Hell
Weeping and gnashing of teeth

Not mapping the afterlife -
A warning for this life!
3-Minute Meeting -

I would like to preach some sermons to help people stop their denial about …
imagining breakthrough ...
imagining breakthrough ...
Good Samaritan

Wedding Banquet/New Jerusalem Descending

Eucharist, wherever 2 or 3 “in my name,” transubstantiating US!
a few final observations ...
the danger of moral indignation

liberal fundamentalism

more woke and outraged than thou

logs in our own eyes? domes in our own minds?

maybe it’s experiencing, not preaching, that counts most?
science fiction and literature of the oppressed

unsayable is said “sideways”
“beast coming out of the sea”
“whore of babylon”
daniel’s visions
the empire will fall
prophecy as prediction (determinism)

versus

prophecy as warning

prophecy as promise

so that your imagination is unlocked
your denial is broken
your paralysis is healed
your despair is defeated
and the impossible becomes possible
mystery as science trick versus
mystery as sign that signifies
mystery as wonder that makes you wonder

literalism - for or against - misses the point!

thus unlocking your imagination so the
impossible can become possible
the kingdom of God is like …

a different economy
a different power structure
a different social order
a different way of life
a different standard of success

every parable is an abduction of the imagination.
utopia and dystopia

We need visions of the future - to pursue, to avoid.
we need a new vision of the future …

yes, for the church.

but more important, for humanity, for civilization, for survival.

right when you’re most tempted to give up, your creative work is most needed.
a brain without fear … foolish.
a brain without hope … desperate.

how can we help our people see our likely future (fear), see a better future (hope), and believe it is possible (faith)?

what love will lead us through?
preaching to empower moral imagination