

# Martin Luther King Sermon

Saturday, January 14, 2017 7:38 AM

Prayer... Dear God,

May the words of my mouth

And the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in your sight

To the glory of your Holy name. Amen

## Introduction

- "Ricky, Get Up Here!" It was the evening of April 4th, 1968. I was a 12 year old 7th grader in my bedroom when I heard my Dad summon me. I was confused on 2 counts. First, his tone suggested I was about to get yelled at and Dad wasn't the Family Disciplinarian - Mom was. Secondly, and unusually I might add, I couldn't think of anything I did wrong.
- So I scampered up the stairs and found my dad in my Parents' bedroom. He was seated on the bed looking at his 9 inch Black & White TV that was in their room.
- My Dad didn't say anything, he just motioned me to sit on the bed with him and together we looked at the TV. We were watching a live broadcast where Robert Kennedy was speaking in Indianapolis to a large audience of mainly Black People. Senator Kennedy was informing them that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot to death a few hours earlier in Memphis.
- As I watched what was unfolding, I was looking at my Dad. And for the first time in my young life he looked unsettled, concerned, maybe even afraid.  
1:12

## 1968

- 1968. You have to remember what was going on in that year. 1968 was a year like none other year that I've experienced in my entire life. The country seemed to be coming apart by the seams.
  - Senator Robert Kennedy, the person talking on the Broadcast that night, would himself be assassinated just 63 days later.
  - Major Cities were on fire, consumed with riots, looting, mayhem & lawlessness.
  - Our universities were liked armed camps with students demonstrating,

- fighting and protesting.
- Here In Chicago, it seemed like open warfare in the streets during the Democratic National Convention as we watched deadly battles between Police and Protesters fill the airwaves.
- The Viet Nam War raged, seemingly unending carnage, with **16,592** American soldiers killed in that year alone. That is an average of **319** per Week.
- Globally, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia, toppling the head of their government, installing their own puppet leader, as Cold War tensions heightened.
- It was truly an Ominous, Extraordinary Time. 2:44

## Who Was Martin Luther King

- But back to Dr. King. I think if you asked anyone today, who he was, you would get the following answers:
  - He was a Civil Rights Leader who championed non-violent methods to affect change:
  - He was an accomplished Orator, maybe the best in our lifetime, that stirred friend and foe to examine their actions & Beliefs.
  - He was an unelected Political Leader working with the government on legislation change around Civil Rights, Voting Rights, War on Poverty, Hunger.
  - Many viewed him as an Agitator, a lawbreaker who stirred up trouble wherever he went.
  - And I am sure in Racist America, Dr. King wore other far uglier labels.
  - But before I go forward, I want to state that I'm not here to beatify Martin Luther King, Jr. He was a human just like us. He was a sinner, and broken just like you & I. There were chapters in his life of words and actions that I'm sure he repented and desired that they remain unpublished. He is just like one of us - broken and in need of God's Grace.
  - But he was something else as well - **and that is the theme of what I talk to you today about** - that is rarely mentioned in any discussion of Dr King. And that was that he was an ordained servant of God, **a Christian Pastor**, with his own home Church, Congregation & ministries. 4:14

## His Background

- In 1954, at the age of 25, Pastor Martin Luther King was installed as Pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery Alabama. He remained Pastor there until 1960, when he resigned because he felt his growing National Civil Rights Role precluded him from fulfilling all his duties there as Pastor. In 1960, he then joined Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, as Associate Pastor

where he served with his father until he was killed in 1968.

- Lewis Baldwin is a Professor of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University. In 2006 he had this to say about Pastor King: " The pastoral role was central to everything, virtually everything, Dr. King achieved or sought to achieve in the church and in the society as a whole." Professor Baldwin further states: I think Dr. King always felt that a preacher and a pastor had to be relevant. That is, you must speak to the issues of your time, and you must be able to relate the gospel and the biblical revelation to the social issues and concerns of your time."

From <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2006/01/13/january-13-2006-martin-luther-king-jr-as-pastor/1788/>>

- His birthday is today this January 15th. Had he lived, he would have been 88 today. We mark his birthday with a national holiday tomorrow.

## His Last Speech

- On April 3rd, on the eve of his assassination, Pastor King delivered his last speech. It was in Memphis Tennessee, where he was there to lend support to the city's Garbage Collection Workers who were embroiled in a wage dispute with the city of Memphis.
- The Speech was about 20 minutes long and initially wasn't even going to happen. As it was that evening, Pastor King was not feeling well and had asked his colleague Ralph Abernathy to speak on his behalf. But at the last minute, Pastor King was persuaded to speak and did so.
- I have listened to this speech many times, as it is easily available through the Internet, YouTube etc. It mainly focused on the Civil Rights struggles, the rampant racism of the day and the non-violent resistance to these unjustness's that Pastor King was urging. But the **last 75 seconds** of his speech, **his last uttered words in Public**, have a **VERY** different meaning to me. These words speak to me as a guiding force of how & what it means to be a Christian, since the day I first heard them. 6:30

## What It means to us today

- These last 75 seconds of this Speech teach us many things:
  - How to live in a world of Fear
  - How to live in a world where the future is unknown
  - How to live life as a Christian

- I'll take the last one first - How to live life as a Christian
  - I've always been a fan of someone who can speak concisely and convey something important using a minimum number of words. I envy that because as you can currently attest, I can't do that.
  - There are 66 books of our Bible, 10 Commandments - really 11 because of the additional Commandment given us by Christ to Love one another. The book of Leviticus alone has over 600 laws within that one Book! Couple that with all the Meanings, Creeds, and other writings intended to guide and shape our faith - well, it sure is a lot. Thirdly, remember that abiding by God's word can be situational. Different situations may call for different responses. That's a lot of stuff to remember.
  - That's why I embrace the 7 little words said by Pastor King in his last speech. I believe they say just about everything you need to know about living as a Christian. He says "**I just want to do God's Will**" And doesn't that just sum it up?
    - Living God's Will requires submitting to God - driven **not** by you sinful Human Will.
    - It Acknowledges that you "Want" to do his will even though as a sinner we fall short of always doing that.
    - It provides you guidance during Situational Issues. "What is God's Will in this matter?" You may not know the answer to every quandary, but in your heart you know what "God's Will" is in most decisions you face each and every day. All you have to do is follow His Will.
    - All of us know the Golden Rule "Do unto Others as You would Have Done to You" Well if that's the Golden Rule, I submit there is a Platinum Rule and it is " I just want to do God's Will". If believe if you try to do this as a Christian, in all that you do, most everything else takes care of itself. You are conducting life on Earth as God intended.

## How to live in a world of Fear

- Pastor King taught us how to live with fear.
- Today, many live in a world of fear. Who can forget this past summer the story of Omran Daqneesh, the little 5 year old boy from Aleppo, Syria who was playing at home when a bomb collapsed his home upon him and his family. The video of the boy, so hurt and shocked that he couldn't even cry as he was lifted from the rubble and placed in an ambulance to go to one of the few

open hospitals left in that city. Think of the hundreds of thousands, the millions who have similar fears, through unending War, Homelessness, and Hunger.

- At the time of this speech, Pastor King had received hundreds of death threats. His enemies had attacked him, jailed him, investigated him, and reviled him. In fact in his speech he states " Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place". Bear in mind he would be assassinated the very next day. But he goes on to say in the next sentence, "But that doesn't matter to me now, because I've been to the Mountaintop!"
- The Mountaintop? What's that? I believe it means that he was armed and protected by the Word, Love & Might Of Almighty God. Borne of a knowledge that God had chosen Him, that God would never Forsake him. That God was walking every step with him. And if evil befell him due to the sinful free will of Man, God would save him for all eternity.
- Pastor King believed in:
  - Exodus 14:13-14 "And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.'"
  - Psalm 34:19 "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."
  - Psalm 91:7 "A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you."
  - Nahum 1:7 "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him."
  - 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 "We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."
- Going to the Mountaintop for us means, that independent of whatever suffering we experience in this temporary life - that we are God's Children, that he will protect us, that we will dwell in his kingdom.
- It means that injustice, illness, poverty, hatred, **evil does not and never can**

win- ONLY GOD DOES THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

- So have faith - you, me, our families, our friends, Omran In Aleppo - be afraid of nothing - fear no man - for your Lord God is your protector, your Father and your Savior.
- At the time, I wish I would have been smart enough to say this to my Dad - who I thought looked afraid as we both sat on his bed back on that awful day in 1968. I'm sure my dad already knew that - but at the time, it would have strengthened us both.

## Speech Playback

- And so I close with the actual speech of Pastor King as he spoke on the eve of his death. But remember, as you hear it, listen to it as you would from your own Pastor, in the context of your Christian faith, about the relationship you have with your Lord God Jesus Christ....