

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Lindale, Texas
Second Sunday After the Epiphany
The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. day
January 14, 2018
John 1:43-51
The Reverend John P. Carr

Follow Me

I have good news! Jesus has called us to follow him! Just as he called Philip to follow him he is calling us to do the same. We have many examples of how to follow from recent and distant history. Jesus called us to follow him just like the disciples and billions of people have followed the example of love that Jesus set.

Today we are celebrating the life and martyrdom of The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., as we recall not only his life but the loss of his life in the pursuit of following the Way of Jesus. For those of us who lived in those turbulent times in the 1960's when we lost John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. to assassinations, it is a hard memory of a hard time. The Civil Rights movement was being born and birth is not without pain. The Kennedy's and particularly Martin Luther King, Jr. paid for their beliefs with their lives.

There are two Martin Luther Kings who I recall. One was the one who was painted as an evil villain of the country by those who were in power and those who harbored racial hatred. Some in government, especially the FBI, worked to discredit Mr. King. On the other hand there was another Martin Luther King. He is the real one. He is the one you find when you heard his speeches or read his writings. His gospel was a gospel not of hatred but of mutual love and affection between the races. He was following Jesus with his words and his actions. Love characterized his message. It was a love for all people and a call for brotherly love between the races.

He said, *"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."*

Those are words of wisdom that reflect the love that he held for the people of America both black and white. This was no casual or passing feeling that he had but was a message based on his faith in Jesus and the message of Jesus to love God and to love your neighbor.

It is easier to talk about it now, but when cities were burning and people were dying in 1960's, it was a bit hard to see how our faith would save the day. Martin Luther King, Jr. did however see through the fog of violence and called to everyone to be non-violent and to step out in faith to love one another.

In his **"I have a Dream"** speech he famously said, *"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."* He believed this dream because of his faith in Jesus and his willingness to follow his faith even though it put him in danger. He said about faith, that *"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*

He was committed to the end to his vision of love between people and knew that he was putting his life at risk by following Jesus. But he believed and followed that vision. He said, *'A man who won't die for something is not fit to live.'*

He died for what he believed.

One person can make a difference when they follow Jesus.

Martin organized non-violent protests modeled after the activities of Ghandi. He wanted to set the example to end racism in America and have all people of all races in America live in brotherly love following the example of Jesus.

He did make a difference. America was changed by his life and his words.

In Africa there is a violent and largely lawless country ironically named the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is overrun by militias who do what they want to the population. They take what they want, kidnap, murder and assault the people of the country.

Into this challenging situation, Young Life Africa had a young man begin to reach the young people in his city. This was no small thing because he was putting his life at risk. He mentored a teen age boy who became a college scholarship recipient from Young Life. Because the college was full in the city where they lived, he could only attend college in a much more dangerous town that was surrounded by at least four militia groups who regularly raided the town for supplies, hostages, and to secure new soldiers by kidnapping them.

This young man not only began his studies in engineering but he began to start Young Life groups in the city. He eventually founded nine (9) groups with over 900 kids coming to hear about Jesus. Some of those kids who accepted Jesus and returned to their towns in the region. They too started Young Life groups in their cities. There are now 110 Young Life groups in the DRC "Congo" which started from one young man willing to take a risk to give teenagers hope in a dangerous land. That was in 2007. In 2017 66,000 kids were reached and 9,500 went to the camps to learn more about Jesus. Over 5,700 of the kids invited Jesus into their hearts and became believers. The growth rate is over 50% for the kids coming to Christ in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

You see, one person can make a difference when they follow Jesus!

"You might think, what can I possibly do, I'm just one person?"

You might be surprised at what you can do!

We did not have a Senior's Day until someone came up with an idea to make more use of our facility for outreach. One little idea and now we have 10-15 seniors coming here every week for fellowship that they were not enjoying just a couple of months ago.

Just look around in your everyday life and look for an unmet need.

- How can it be addressed?
- How can you be the hands of Christ in that moment?
- How can you affect the lives of those around you in a positive Christ like way?

It is when we have the love of Christ within us and we live our life as a reflection of that love that we can change the world even though we are only one person. When we follow of Jesus, we can see the need and be the hands of Christ in the world.

- It is time for us to look up, to look beyond our usual boundaries,
- it is time for us to see new opportunities,
- it is time for us to prayerfully ask God to guide us.

One person can make a difference when they follow Jesus.

- Give yourself permission to imagine,
- permission to envision and
- permission to do something new for the kingdom this year.
- You can make a difference by following Jesus.

Amen