

Today the truth is more important than ever before!

We come to this day with the reality of our world laid bare, the worst of human nature fully exposed.

We come to this day no longer insulated from the inhumanity that we are capable of.

After the events of last week, if we are paying attention at all, if we are awake, the reality of our existence is crystal clear. We are a divided nation.

I realize that for many this has been crystal clear for generations. I weep with you and for you.

For many more, they have known or at least observed this reality from a distance and done nothing.

For others this breach, this division among us is no longer acceptable and we are crying out for justice and equality for all God's children.

For others still, this reality is clear, but skewed by fear and hate and their ultimate answer, their very real response is violence. To whom do we turn for help?

The obvious answer is and remains Jesus Christ.

And if we could hear directly from our Lord then I am confident all would be well. If we would heed what we already know to be true about HIS life and follow in HIS footsteps, then all would be set right.

However, as of today, our Lord's words are still being twisted to fit our own personal & corporate agendas. We can no longer simply trust our political leaders, media and social systems to speak the truth to us.

So, who can we turn to for truth? The answer remains, at least for me, the Christ found in Jesus of Nazareth. And where can we hear this truth?

This where I turn to the purpose of our gathering.

Being raised in a middle-class household, I was insulated from many of the problems of the world. I understand this as privilege, I get it. As I grew both physically and spiritually, I discovered various people who had influence upon me. Spanning all my life, they would make quite a long list.

But I must say that as concerns racial inequities and prejudice (racism) much of what I was hearing only deepened my confusion. That is until I started reading some of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr was saying to the world. His book detailing the Montgomery Bus boycott was a game changer.

I was impressed by the depth of his background and the sources he studied to improve his knowledge. I was amazed by his willingness to put himself in harm's way for the sake of others. I was taken by his clear stands on civil rights and the war in Vietnam. I was awed by the humility he expressed in receiving the recognition and adulation of his peers.

Expressly shown in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Peace. I wondered at the strength he showed in the face of deathly threat and his awareness to call on the Lord for help when the trouble got too much for him to bear on his own.

But what I want to say to you today and what I want you to hear is how he changed my life. As I said for years I wandered in confusion about the ills of our nation's past, especially as concerns the legacy of slavery. I wondered at how it all played out and how in the world we as a nation could ever truly live together in true harmony and lasting peace. -- Most of the rhetoric I was hearing was only adding fuel to the fire.

That is until I read some of the story of Dr. King.

Until I heard in my heart what this servant of God was saying. Until I heard **his** truth, I was at wits end to see how any of us could ever overcome!

What I saw in Dr. King was the truth, but it was truth presented in a way that could be heard. You have heard people talk about speaking the truth in love. Mostly it is just talk, because somewhere along the line their truth becomes less about love and more about themselves.

Perhaps this is one point that Dr. King was making in his Drum Major sermon. Sometimes, if we are not careful our egos get in the way of our message.

I do not believe that this is the case with Dr. King.

He was one of the few people I observed that **truly could** speak the truth in love and this is how I needed to hear that difficult message.

Hearing the message, I was convinced that Dr. King's love for humankind included all God's people regardless of race, color or creed. Knowing this I am able to hear more and more of the truth.

But you know, it is not enough to hear the truth, you've got to act on it as well. And Dr. King had a special way to act on the truth that was in him.

His non-violent approach to his call to serve went way beyond his own pulpit. He was pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for about year before his calling took him into the heart of the civil rights movement which became his life work.

Dr. King's work on earth was guided by Mahatma Ghandi. From Ghandi he learned that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but the destruction of humanity.

So, he followed this non-violent path as he sought to make the world a better place.

We remember the Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. today & in the coming week not so much for his accomplishments, but more for the truth he shared as a child of God.

He once said, "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality...

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

Being true to our purpose here today, let's remember Dr. King as he wished.

IN musing over his own funeral, he gave instruction on what he would want someone to say about him.

Dr. King instructed, "tell them not to talk too long. --- Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards—that's not important. Tell them not to mention where I went to school.

I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others.

I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody.

As we continue this day's journey in prayer, listen for the voice of truth and hear the call to serve.

Dr. King had a dream, may we work together to make this dream our new reality & live together in peace.