

Our heart continues to be heavy as we witnessed the events of January 6, 2020 when a mob emboldened by hats, falsehoods, and racism laid siege to the US Capital. We are in a continued state of trauma as we learn about additional threats of violence that will be carried out before the Inauguration of President elect Biden on January 20th to subvert our democracy.

William Faulkner said, the past is never dead. It's not ever past. Hate, violence, and evil continue to visit us as we strive towards to a more inclusive society. Last week, White supremacy and fragility have converged in the Capital- people all ways of life, including our neighbors. And truth be told, what we saw comes from the reality that we have not acknowledged or deal properly with American's original sin of racism.

But if there is any good news this morning.... Here it is.... The God of history continues to call us to repentance, reconciliation, justice through Prophets. In ancient Israel, the prophet held no appointed or inherited office like those of the priest and the King. Rather the prophet was called directly by God for all walks of life. The prophet was empowered by the spirit of God to speak the Word of God "to the people". These were the prophet's sole credentials.

In the 8th century BC Amos, who amid the injustices of his day, cried out in the words that echo across the centuries, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Amos pulled no punches; he was direct and relentless in his criticism of Israel, for it had failed to keep God's covenant, and if denied justice to many of its own people.

The God of history places Dr. King in the proud tradition of prophets reaching back to and through his church to speak to the nation during a time of deep division and turmoil. Dr. King a reluctant prophet comes

to us to call out the injustice Jim Crow segregation and discrimination, white supremacy, and racial bigotry.

How strange that this modern-day prophet would not come from the majority group but from one those people who were disinherited and disallowed.

How strange that people from every sector of American society, the educated, those who denied an education, the affluent and the welfare recipients, students of all ages, whites and blacks, men, and women – all who had been separated by rigid social, legal codes and religion. King's reach was broad... and his message brought together people for a common cause and a common good.

Arrested more than 15 times, jailed, and dishonored for his social protest, stabbed, and bombed out of this home and received regular death-threats. He refused to cooperate with evil systems, and he practiced nonviolence civil disobedience and he taught his followers to practice nonviolence and it changed the world. Without lifting a sword, or a gun or a bat, the walls of segregation tumbled down, Jim Crow was dismantled, and African Americans finally got the right to fully participate in democracy through the ballot box. And many white people found their liberation as well.

How strange it is that he condemned all forms of violence, yet his life was snuffed out by a single shot from an assassin's rifle in Memphis Tennessee in 1968. He was supporting striking sanitation workers so that they could get a fair wage. He did not see the fulfillment of his days.

As time has passed, we have domesticated the legacy of Dr. King. With the passage of legislation in 1994 calling for The King Service Act, the

King Holiday was transformed into a National Day of Service. Rev. Dr. King is now the Patron Saint of Community Service.

Over what we call the MLK weekend, wonderful days of service will be sponsored by corporation, religious groups, and other civic minded institutions and people under the banner of, “everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.” And it is true, we should all be reaching out and serving our neighbors. But we should not allow the “one prophetic voice of the 20th century” to be hijacked by a ritual of civic engagement safely altering the legacy of a man who resisted violence and agitated for racial and economic justice and freedom.

Charity work is good work, and it will always be necessary. Good works are inadequate to deal with the crisis of school funding, public infrastructure, climate change and ecological destruction, poverty, and inequality.

Community breakfast, gospel singing, and community service are great! They make me feel and I love it. But in these dangerous times we need God’s justice.

We will need justice and truth-telling to confront white nationalist. Justice that calls for accountability, repentance, and reconciliation.

We need justice....to house unhoused families and individuals or stop the 5,000 plus evictions that are in play right now in Massachusetts.

We need justice to stop police brutality and the state sanctioned killing of black and brown bodies.

We need justice to deal with the longstanding inequalities that the COVID has revealed.

The prophet said, let’ justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

We need to reclaim Dr. King as the “Drum major for Justice”

It is time to do something different..... It is time to listen to the prophet!

When Dr. King preached at the Washington National Cathedral on March 31, 1968, nobody knew it would be the last Sunday sermon he would ever give. His “Remaining Awake Through a great revolution” sermon has great significance and is relevant to us today given the crossroad that we are facing as a society.

Rev. King tells that story about Rip Van Winkle- he goes up the mountain, the sign had a picture of King George the 3rd of England. 20 years later when he comes down the mountain to see a picture of George Washington- the new President of the US. When he saw the picture of GW, he was amazed. He slept through a revolution.

One of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amidst a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, and the new mental responses that the new situation demands. Then we end up sleeping through a revolution, while God is making all things new. Now whenever anything new comes into history.... it brings with its new challenges... and now opportunities.

It is time to do something different.....Listen to the Prophet

It is time for truth-telling in our communities of faith. Quote, from King’s sermon, “I can see nothing more urgent than for America to work passionately and unrelentingly -to get rid of the disease of racism.... We must face the sad fact that 11 o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing, “In Christ there is no East or West”.

It is critical for us to reflect upon the possibility that God intends all people who have been created in God’s image to learn and respect

each other and treat one another as equals. We who call ourselves Christians must learn how to share our lives, our possessions and power with one another. If we claim that being Jew or Greek, female, or male is a reason for disunity, we remain separate because we protect ourselves from having to face the deeper issues of our woundedness and shield ourselves from having to change.

In this moment, after centuries of complicity, North American Christians need to see how the norms of white supremacy has become deeply and broadly integrated into white Christian identity.

Understanding the historical legacy of white supremacy and how it lives on today ii the church calls for truth telling and reckoning with a painful and shameful past. And it calls upon us to challenge the false narrative of whiteness. This work of racial healing and reconciliation lies on the doorsteps of the church.

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We need to learn to live together as brothers and sisters... or we will all perish together as fools. King goes on to say that “we are tied together in a single garment of mutual destiny. I cannot be who I am until you are what you ought to be.... You can not be who you are to be until I am to be... We are dependent on each other.

We live in an us verse them world. We live in a polarized nation right now. We draw the lines quickly assuming that we are safe and secure. However, the COVID-19 is showing us just how fragile life is.

What Dr. King is telling us is that our welfare can only be found in the most vulnerable neighbor. Justice will not be guaranteed to me until we have built a culture that ensures justice for everyone. No one is safe

until we are all safe. King goes on to say this is the way the universe is made. We must see this and believe this.

Our job is to be activist..... Yes, in the streets, but let's start around our own kitchen tables about how we are connected and dependent on one another. Let's talk about self-sacrificing love. Stay engaged in hard conversations.

It is time to do something different. Time and time again Dr. King said the "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. Remember that, because we have tough days ahead of us and it is up lifting to know that there is HOPE. We saw HOPE last week in GA when brown and black people came out in record numbers electing their first black Senator and Jon Osoff a Jewish brother – both are headed to the US Senate.

But HOPE comes with a little yellow sticky note, a cautionary note. The notes says that you and I, WE are responsible for taking our hands and bending that arc towards justice. It is up to us to take responsibility to do better and do more to heal the broken places in our world.

We might prefer to hit the snooze button my friends, but we need to stay awake during this revolution.

AS Christians we follow a man, Jesus, who never took the easy way out. Jesus did not censor himself for fear of retribution. He challenged the institutional oppression of his day and calls us to confront the injustice of our own time. He called for an inclusive democracy.

And in King we honor a man who paid the ultimate price to follow Jesus' greatest commandment: "That you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend.

It is time to do something different.

“Love is stronger than fear, life stronger than death, hope stronger than despair. We have to trust that the risk of loving is always worth taking.”

Henri Nouwen

It is time to do something different.