

the Venues Go Deep

The Jesus Way

“...with Liberty and Justice for All”

January 17, 2016

How do you usually spend Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

What is there about Martin Luther King Jr. stands out to you?

Feeling tired and scared, King heard Jesus tell him, “*Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you, even until the end of the world.*”

From the Birmingham jail, King wrote a letter to white pastors who had criticized King. In that letter he said, “*Was not Jesus an extremist for love: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’? Was not Amos an extremist for justice: ‘Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream’”?*

What is your understanding of justice?

*How does an American understanding of justice differ from a Biblical understanding of justice?
See Isaiah 58:6-12*

What injustices was King trying to correct?

Take a look at the injustices Jesus tried to correct.

1. Jesus had compassion toward social outsiders.

Read Mark 1:40-44

What injustices were experienced by those with leprosy?

Read Luke 14:1-15

What did Jesus see that upset him?

Read Leviticus 21:16-21

What are your thoughts about this prohibition?

In light of the Leviticus passage, think about how radical Jesus’ statement was.

2. Protesting Gender Inequality.

What evidence of gender inequality have you seen?

To understand the way women were viewed, take a look at Exodus 20:17.

Read John 20:11-18 and Luke 10:38-42.

How do these events show Jesus changing the social norms?

3. Giving value to children.

Historian O.M. Bakke wrote a study called *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, in which he noted that in the ancient world, children usually didn't get named until the 8th day or so. Up until then there was a chance that the infant would be killed or left to die of exposure – particularly if it was deformed or a female. This custom changed due to what you read in the following verses:

Read Luke 18:15-17 and Matthew 18:1-5.

What does Jesus do to communicate the value of children?

4. Rejecting racism.

Read John 4:9 (The entire chapter is great for context.)

Why do you think Jesus so often made the hero of his stories a Samaritan?

What evidence of racism do you see present today?

What experience of racism/prejudice have you had – either as the victim or the perpetrator?

Roadmap to Reconciliation tells about a bus tour to a museum featuring photo after photo of black people being lynched, often with white people standing by cheering and celebrating. The pictures were horrifying and disturbing. Back on the bus, things got tense. Then a white girl said to a black girl, “I don't know what to do with what I just saw. I can't fix your pain, but I can see it. And I will work the rest of my life to fight for you and for your children so that they won't experience it.”

What do you think about the girl's promise?

In what areas of our culture do you see the need for justice?

King said, “There are no gradations of the image of God.”

How does that view affect your view of people?

How does that impact your treatment of people?