HOLY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

an original lesson by the Rev. Emily J. Garcia, in the style of the Godly Play curriculum

The Episcopal Church has a day set aside for Martin Luther King—April 4, the day that he died. (This is always the day that we celebrate particular Christians, because it is the day they “enter into glory.”) However, as the nation remembers him on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day in January, that also seems an appropriate time to use this lesson.

There is a special collect for his day:

Almighty God, by the hand of Moses your servant you led your people out of slavery, and made them free at last: Grant that your Church, following the example of your prophet Martin Luther King, may resist oppression in the name of your love, and may secure for all your children the blessed liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

You can find this prayer and the Scripture readings for his day here [http://www.lectionarypage.net/LesserFF/Apr/King.html].

In the Episcopal Church, he is remembered as a “Civil Rights Leader and Martyr.” This is why we say “he thought, and acted, and died for God.”

20 January 2020

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MOVEMENTS

Go and get the material for the story.

Unfold the green underlay in front of you and say:

Take the main saint picture from the tray and place it in the center of the underlay with Martin’s image facing up and toward the children.

Place the little books on the underlay, above Martin’s head.

Place the pictures of segregating signs on the underlay, in a row, as if to block him.

Place the picture of Martin preaching from the pulpit, below the main picture.

WORDS

Watch where I go to get the lesson for today.

This is the story of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The church remembers him in April.

In church, we remember Martin because he spoke out and died for God.

He lived and died not too long ago. He was named after Martin Luther of Germany, another man a long time before, who loved the Bible and who spoke out against the Church, when it was going against God’s will and hurting people.

*This* Martin studied the Bible too—he knew all of its books, backwards and forwards.

He studied many people who had written about God—books of theology. He read books by theologians Paul Tillich and Karl Barth and Walter Rauschenbusch, and books by his friend Howard Thurman, and older books by Hegel and Spinoza, and very old books by Plotinus and Hindu philosophers. (In fact, he read a lot of this right here in Boston, when he was a student at Boston University!) He loved reading about God and people, and thinking about what he read.

Because he read the Bible so much, Martin knew that he had to speak up about what was happening around him.

Because he read the Bible so much, he knew that it was wrong that America kept white people separate and safe and clean, when Black and Brown people were kept apart. Black people—and other people who weren’t white—were treated badly, and unfairly, in all parts of their lives. Martin *knew* that God did not want it to be this way.

And so Martin became like Moses. Moses said to Pharaoh, *Let my people go*. And Martin said the same thing to America—to white people in neighborhoods and cities and in the government and in churches.

The Story of Holy Martin Luther King, Jr.
This made many people—maybe *most* people—very angry. One day, someone called Martin, and they said that they were going to kill him, and going to kill his wife and his daughter, too. Martin knew that this person really might do that.

That night, he couldn’t sleep. He got up in the middle of the night. And at midnight, he sat at his kitchen table, and he prayed. He said,

*Lord, I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid... I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone.*

And there at the kitchen table at midnight, Martin heard God’s voice say,

*Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth... I will be with you, even until the end of the world.*

And so Martin kept speaking up. He marched with people—black and white and brown people—to show the world that something was wrong. And he spoke and spoke and spoke about how God wanted the world to be different. When they marched, police officers would hurt them, and sometimes Martin was arrested, and people shouted at them, but they kept marching, and singing “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.”

And then, one day in April, Martin was in a room with his friends, after he had given a speech. He went out on the balcony, and while he was standing there, someone shot him, and killed him.

He died because of what he had said and done, and how he spoken up in God’s name. The church remembers him, and we call him a martyr, because he died for God. And now, all of America remembers him too.

Now, I wonder, what part of the story you like best.
- like least
- Where are you in the story?