

Let's Remember Hope ...

When we think of Dr. King most of us remember his "*I have a Dream*" speech delivered to those gathered around the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. in 1963. There have been few memorable speeches made before or since then. The words of Dr. King will linger on for many more years to come. He dreamed of a day when racial justice and equality would come true. Of course, with all the recent tragic events happening in our country his dream has yet to be completely fulfilled.

- Some of you are too young to understand what certain Americans had to endure
- Some of you never saw the separate drinking fountains for whites and blacks or colored balconies in movie theatres
- Some of you are too young to understand how a tired and thoroughly respectable Negro seamstress, named Rosa Parks, could be thrown in jail and fined simply because she refused to give up her seat on an Alabama bus so a white man could sit down

And that list could go on and on.

Our history in America isn't often 'pretty or just' especially when Americans can't eat at certain lunch counters – when Americans can't register in motels or use particular bathrooms or when Americans can't buy or rent a home wherever they chose or when Americans can't attend certain schools all because of the color of their skin.

I'm a white woman from Chicago. I was only 7 years old when Dr. King gave his speech. I did not really hear or learn about his famous speech until I was in High School which was long after Dr. King had been murdered and I did not experience any of these things that happened. Even though I didn't experience firsthand the racial prejudice and hatred that many African Americans experienced and although my body never felt the pressure of a fire hose or felt the bite of a German Shepherd's teeth or the sting and pain of a policeman's Billy club – I stand here with hope because of courageous men and women like Dr. King who have a dream of hope for America.

I don't write this today with the intent of giving you a litany of events for the civil rights movement back in the 60's and it's not my intent to remind you over and over again about America's dark past – the blood stain of history records America's guilt and pain.

But I will tell you that Dr. King risked his life to combat social injustice and to enhance the welfare of others. Pieces of his dream have become a reality but truth be told, the 21st century continues to be a challenging time. We still see the hatred, prejudice, racism, and inequality. This century is also challenging because millions of people still live in poverty in a country of great wealth, education opportunities are still not equal and accessible for many Americans.

Millions of people don't have adequate health care and many are still mistreated, physically assaulted and denied opportunities based on their race and religion.

Dr. King once said, *"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of great challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige and even his life for the welfare of others."*

The dream of hope for America was not just Dr. King's but it's also for each of us. It will take the efforts of countless everyday people like you and me and many others whose name we'll never know who decide that they can't sit around idle and allow the cup of injustice, suffering, hatred, cruelty and pain to spill over any longer. We can make this country a better place by helping to make a difference one small win at a time.

- We can help by changing our hearts – to see people as our brothers and sisters
- We can help by changing the way we view things – not through the lens of racism or hatred but through the lens of love and grace
- We can help if we are willing to stop raising our fist and extend to our fellow brothers and sisters the handshake of brotherly and sisterly love
- We can help make a difference in our community by agreeing to help someone – let's remember the widow and the orphan, the hungry, those in prison – let's speak out against injustice when we see it or experience it ourselves

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wanted the best for this country. A country united in unity, love, care and compassion for one another. He challenged our thinking, our traditions and way of life and offered us the dream of **HOPE!** Dreamers may die but the dreams live on and Dr. King's dream still lives on.

In the words of hope he said,

I have a dream today...

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the south with. With this faith we will be able to hew out the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

With this faith we will be able to work together. To pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing, land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

Let's grab hope and faith and be a dreamer like Dr. King. We can make a difference together.

In hope for America,

Pastor Amanda+