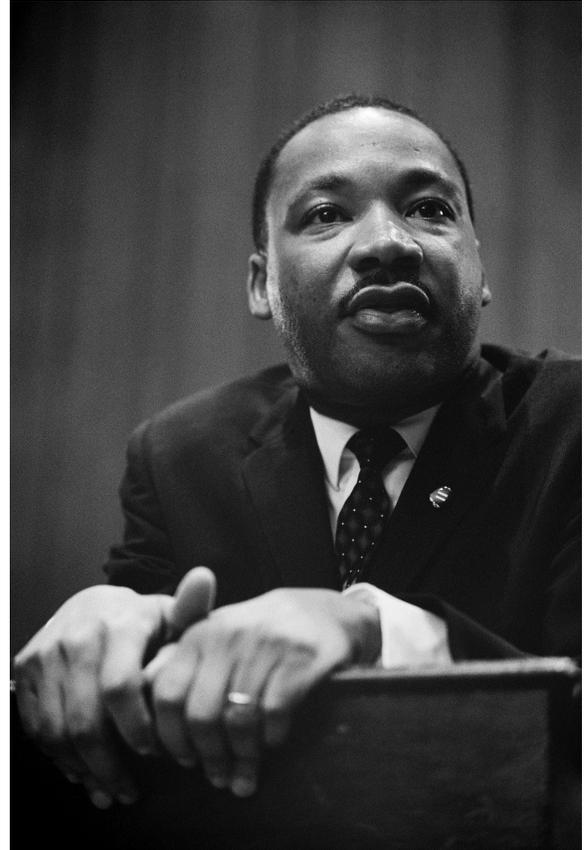


A Martin Luther King Jr Lesson

January 17, 2022

[LISTEN TO THE](#)
["I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH](#)

Today is the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King taught many things in his short life. He taught peace, nonviolence, and equality but his voice was loudest when it came to change.



Now I want us to do an activity together before I get started. Use the next page to participate in this experiment regarding change. I want you to think about where you fall on this line when it comes to change. Are you at the furthest end to the left? The right? Are you right in the middle? Are you one of those people who when you do surveys you can never select “always” or “never” because you just cannot commit 100% to either of those selections so you find yourself selecting “sometimes” for every answer? Just me?

Like Change

Dislike Change

Self Examination

The point is to examine for a moment where you might find yourself on the spectrum of change. Truly, how do you feel about change?

Change is a hard word to even say out loud. For some it can be paralyzing, terrifying, and even crippling. Change is long spectrum. Some fall far to one end – they hate change.

We've seen these people in our churches and in our lives for as long as we've been around. Some wouldn't admit it. Some would fight to the death to keep something exactly the same as it's always been. Some would choose to die on the hill of anything, anything in the world if it meant they didn't have to change.

Some people love change a little too much. They will run for the hills from something that isn't working. If they could, they'd throw every aspect of life that didn't work into a dumpster and move on as quickly as possible. Some people think change is the answer to all problems. There is no middle ground or reexamine option. There's no strategy, team work, or critical thinking the solution is simply to move on.

The 'C' Word.

Most people, I hope, fall somewhere in the middle. And yet, it doesn't matter where you fall the word can still bring about deep anxiety. Every year I do the star project, I give my congregation members and friends a word of the year. There are over 400 words in the basket to pick from and the dreaded 'c' word is buried in there somewhere. Every year, someone gets it and every year as they reveal their star to me I say the same thing, "oooooh sorry." For the record the word 'birth' is in there too and I've never prayed harder NOT to get a word in my life.

Dr. King's Words Ring True

Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963 and begged the world for change.

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It's funny, at the beginning of 2020, 2 solid years ago, if you had asked me what needs to change, I would have provided you with a thorough list. And not to say that I don't think those things still need to change, but today, that list is very different. I feel like my life has been in a snow globe these last two years, and someone keeps coming along shaking it up just as the snow has settled around me.

What needs to change? Are you an agent of that change or are you fighting against it? What doesn't need to change? Have you paused to think about what could be fixed instead of tossed? Where are you on that spectrum of change and have you considered making a few steps towards the middle?

Some need change...

If you've never read or listened to Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech from the Lincoln Memorial I encourage you do so and I'll provide you with the link. Listen for the passion in this young man's voice, he's only 37 years old. As you read or listen think about this – sometimes we resist change so hard we forget there are people in our world who need it so bad their lives depend on it. Some people, are willing to die for change while some will fight until the sun goes down to keep a painting on a certain wall or a book on a certain shelf or choir robes of a certain color.

There is a line in the "I Have a Dream" speech where Dr. King begs his congregation not to allow their mission to turn into mistrust of all white people. It is profound, that a man, standing at the Lincoln Memorial, with an audience of thousands, and a mission to demand racial equality would pause, and give a sentence to remind us all not to meet hatred with hatred. And that is what I think needs to change today. Let us find a way, today, immediately, to resist meeting hatred with hatred.

Closing Prayer

Oh Lord our God we come before you as your children. We struggle with new, different, and difficult. We resist change when sometimes we should embrace it. We rush change when sometimes we should reexamine. Oh God, no matter where we are in life may we be people of love and not hatred, peace and not violence, justice and not injustice. May our eyes be opened to your possibilities. May our hearts be ready for change. May our ears be ready to hear your voice, whispering in our ears. Amen.