

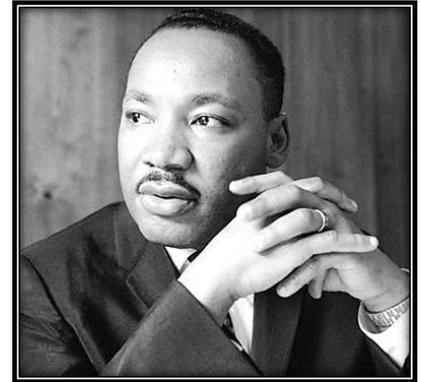


“THE WORLD IS ALL MESSED UP. THE NATION IS SICK. TROUBLE IS IN THE LAND; CONFUSION ALL AROUND.”

(Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

“That's a strange statement” King said in his “I've Been To The Mountaintop” speech of 3 April 1968, “but I know” he continued, “somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men, in some strange way, are responding.”

If men of the twentieth century like Martin Luther King Jr. himself responded in peaceful, non-violent ways to the injustices of their times, then there is no reason to think that men of the twenty-first century can't respond to injustice in the same way. As King said in that same speech: **“We don't have to argue with anybody. We don't have to curse and go around acting bad with our words. We don't need any bricks and bottles.”** We have to turn to Jesus! That is what the Reverend King did. And that is what “a scholar of the law” did. Here is how King explains it:



“One day a man came to Jesus, and he wanted to raise some questions about some vital matters of life. At points he wanted to trick Jesus, and show Him that he knew a little more than Jesus knew and throw Him off base....

Now that question could have easily ended up in a philosophical and theological debate. But Jesus immediately pulled that question from mid-air, and placed it on a dangerous curve between Jerusalem and Jericho. And He talked about a certain man, who fell among thieves. You remember that a Levite and a priest passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. And finally a man of another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But he got down with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying, this was the good man, this was the great man, because he had the capacity to project the “I” into the “thou,” and to be concerned about his brother.

Now you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn't stop. At times we say they were busy going to a church meeting, an ecclesiastical gathering, and they had to get on down to Jerusalem so they wouldn't be late for their meeting. At other times we would speculate that there was a religious law that “One who was engaged in religious ceremonials was not to touch a human body twenty-four hours before the ceremony.” And every now and then we begin to wonder whether maybe they were not going down to Jerusalem -- or down to Jericho, rather to organize a “Jericho Road Improvement Association.” That's a possibility. Maybe they felt that it was better to deal with the problem from the causal root, rather than to get bogged down with an individual effect.

But I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that those men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road. I remember when Mrs. King and I were first in Jerusalem. We rented a car and drove from Jerusalem down to Jericho. And as soon as we got on that road, I said to my wife, “I can see why Jesus used this as the setting for His parable.” It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing. You start out in Jerusalem, which is about 1200 miles -- or rather 1200 feet above sea level. And by the time you get down to Jericho, fifteen or twenty minutes later, you're about 2200 feet below sea level. That's a dangerous road. In the days of Jesus it came to be known as the “Bloody Pass.” And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked -- the first question that the Levite asked was, “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: **“If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”**