

In the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Good morning St. Andrew's. It is good to be worshiping with you all again especially on this day that we commemorate Dr. King. As many of you know I have been accepted into Virginia Theological Seminary and will be attending this Fall. Boy am I ready for Seminary. But I sure have enjoyed my time here at St. Andrew's. Thank you so much for letting me be a part of your special community.

Today, I want to talk about images. Images that we might hold of things, events or people. Impressions that affect how we view that thing or person. These can be good or bad, small or large, but they reflect on how we see things. It is natural, and it is how we make sense of the world.

I have felt a call to ministry for a long time. Since I was very young, having had a strong impression of the church. My sisters and I would go home and play pretend church. We would take my mom's leftover roti passing it around like it was communion. We would climb onto the washing machine and give sermons from the machine that was our pulpit. When I would get up to the "pulpit", I would yell loudly, slam my fists and point aggressively. "Brush your teeth before bed!" I imagine that was content of my sermons.

See I had this view about preachers. I thought it involved a lot of yelling and pointing at the congregation. I was obviously wrong. I have found there is hardly any pointing or yelling. That was my image of a preacher though. A charismatic person yelling about personal hygiene. I am glad I am over that image.

When I was in middle school, I could sense my call a little bit more clearly from when I was just playing church with my sisters. I had this sense that God was leading me towards ministry. I prayed a lot about it at the time. "God please please pretty please, let me not be a priest. Anything but a priest." I had a negative image of the priesthood. To a middle school kid, there is nothing more boring to do with your life than to become a priest. I thought priests were not allowed to do anything fun. I just thought they had to sit at home and pray until Sunday. I was wrong.

I think I was mixing together a priest and a monk. I thought of people in robes, completely detached from the world. That is in fact not true at all. Ministers are called to be heavily involved in what is going on in the world. This is what Dr. King said about preachers in his last speech before his death,

"Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher must have a kind of fire shut up in his bones. And whenever injustice is around he tells it. Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and saith, "When God speaks who can but prophesy?" Again with Amos, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Somehow the preacher must say with Jesus, "The

Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me," and he's anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor."

This is what drew me to the priesthood and led me to pursue ordination. Of working with people for the will of God, the beloved community, the kingdom of God. That is the image of the world and the image of God I want to pursue.

All of us have an image of Dr. King. They are extraordinary images because he was an extraordinary man. From speeches like I have a dream to I have been to the mountaintop. And his work in organized civil disobedience like the Montgomery bus boycotts or the March from Selma.

Often forgotten in our remembered image of Dr. King, is his radicalness. How he wanted desegregation now, not in a slow process which wouldn't offend anyone. That he was arrested 30 times. That the media and many white folks regarded Dr. King as a troublemaker and an instigator of racial tension. People did not want Dr. King and SCLC to come to their town.

We forget that Dr. King opposed military action in Vietnam. He was opposed to American military action worldwide.

We can also forget that Dr. King was killed, marching for better wages and working conditions for sanitation workers.

Dr. King, can and has been sanitized, palatable. It is easy to say Dr. King had a dream but it is hard for us to admit, that dream has not come true.

People had an impression of the civil rights movement then and people have an impression of the social justice movements now, including, Black Lives Matter. Some might believe that it is violent, instigates racial tension, some think it's methods are not correct, moving too fast. Some think it polarizes and does not care about law enforcement or white people who are also affected by police brutality.

I claim that Black lives to matter, that black skin should not strike fear in law enforcement or otherwise. That hands up, means do not shoot. That black and brown people deserve the same American Dream that has been granted to White Americans. Black and brown communities deserve education funding. Black and brown skin deserves fair treatment by law enforcement. Black and brown skin deserves fair health care. Black and brown skin does not deserve incarceration rates triple the rate of their White brothers and sisters. We all deserve the American Dream.

Images are important. They can be very powerful too. I want to leave you all with two images as they relate to Jesus on the cross, a minority man, killed by the government because he taught of something greater than the Roman Empire. Whose death and resurrection started

one of the biggest movements in human history. A movement towards the beloved community, the kingdom of God.

First is the image of Emmett Till's body. In 1955, 14-year-old, Emmett was lynched. His mom wanted the world to see what had happened to her son. So, she had an open casket funeral, so the world could see her son mutilated, figures missing. Beaten, shot in the head and swollen from his body being thrown into the river. Emmett Till's death sparked a defining movement in American History. Emmett Till's death was the catalyst for the civil rights movement.

The second image is of Trayvon Martin. A seventeen-year-old shot dead by a neighborhood watch coordinator. His death and the subsequent acquittal of his killer started the Black Lives Matter movement.

Three deaths, three movements. Christ resurrected... So did Emmett and Trayvon in a movement that started after their deaths. Emmett's death resurrected the movement that shined a light on the injustice. Movements for a better future. Movements that want equality. So that we can be one step closer to the new heaven and new earth that we all desire.

Let it be so.