

# THE VERY REVEREND WILLIAM O. DANIEL, JR., PHD

23 Main Street • Geneseo, New York 14454  
Phone: 585.210.0858 • E-Mail: wdaniel@stmikesgeneseo.org

“And Jesus said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’”

The worth of a person is revealed not in how much they draw attention to themselves or to their own desires and wishes; rather, the worth of a person is made manifest in how well they direct our attention and desires to the goodness of God in all things.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on January 15, 1929, and we celebrate his life and legacy on the Monday that follows each year. And like all American heroes we memorialize King by closing the bank and post office and open the malls early for shopping. Ahh, Capitalism. But Martin Luther King was one of these rare prophets who, setting himself aside, spoke the truth of the Gospel with an eloquence and cadence that cut to the heart of his hearers, as if he were carrying on an intimate conversation with each listener.

There are those whose words, whether we agree with them or not, seem to echo from within, as deep calls to deep from the souls of the speaker and the soul of the hearer. I feel this way every time I hear one of Dr. King’s sermons or speeches. Whether he’s telling African-American, middle school children not to let anyone bring them so low as to make them hate, or whether he’s

admonishing politicians from the pulpit of Washington Cathedral for spending more money building military bases throughout the world than they do on feeding the hungry in this is every land, King's words call attention to the One whose way of Love demands our complete attention, our total allegiance—Jesus the Christ of God. This Love, says T.S. Eliot, “costs not less than everything,” which King knew all too well.

The call of Love is the call to set ourselves aside in such ways that what people hear and see in us is not us, but Christ. The call of Love is to, by our life and witness, say to everyone around us, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

Following in the footsteps of John the Baptist, Martin Luther King constantly taught everyone who would listen to see the Lamb of God lying hungry in the streets. He spoke to everyone who listen that, “We can either learn to live together as brothers, or we can die together as fools.” He spoke truth to power with a power that only truth can afford, and just like the prophets of old, just like John the Baptist and just like Jesus, we killed him.

“I can never be,” says King, “what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be unless I am who I ought to be.” Which is to say that our lives are woven together in such ways that the harm we do to anyone is always self-inflicting. “What affects one person directly,” says King, “affects everyone indirectly.”

During this season of the Christian year that follows the Epiphany, we are invited to attend to the mystery of the union God has made between heaven and earth, an eternal union made manifest in Christ that bears upon every relationship we share with the whole of creation. We are invited to discern how well our individual lives are ordered by and oriented to the Gospel. When I see the hungry, do I see the Lamb of God? When I see my neighbor, do I see the Lamb of God? When I see the one who I find difficult to love, do I see the Lamb of God?

Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968, because he, like John the Baptist, saying to everyone, “Look, here is the Lamb of God.” And while we remember his cause to end racism, hunger and violence, we continue to struggle with the

fiction of racial divides in our own country, people remain hungry, and violence continues to be our first response.

Gregory of Nyssa, one of the great saints who defended and fashioned our Nicene Creed, said that, ‘Violence and anger arise out of the animal who sees others as a threat to their survival.

Peace comes from the soul of humans who know that their life rests in God, and that every person is an adopted child of God.’

When John told Andrew, “Look, here is the Lamb of God,” Andrew immediately went to follow Jesus. And when Andrew comes running up to Jesus, he says to Andrew, “What are you looking for?” As if fumbling for words and reluctant to come right out and ask Jesus if he was the Messiah, Andrew decides it’s safer to ask in which hotel Jesus is staying. And Jesus responds quite plainly, “Come and see.”

Come and see, says Christ. Come and see in lame the Lamb of God. Come and see in the poor and hungry the Lamb of God. Come and see in every person, be they black, brown or white, be they citizen or immigrant, be they young or old, democrat or republican, see the Lamb of God. Come and see in the depths of

every human soul who has forgotten their first love, the Lamb of God within, just waiting for someone to call attention to Christ in them, in the world, in all things; waiting for someone who will not assume how they will respond but attend to Love in them, so that healing might begin with us, in our relationships with each other and the world.

If we want to see the Lamb of God we may have to first unlearn everything we think we know about God, and rather, heeding the words of the prophets, begin looking for the God who is all and is in all, directing the attention of others not to my anxieties and insecurities but to the peace that passes all understanding, who has given us everything we need to end racism, to end hunger and violence, which begins nowhere else but where we sit or stand right now.

“What are you looking for?” says Jesus. Whatever it is, you will find it. And if we do not see the Lamb of God in each other, if we do not see the Lamb of God in the poor, if we do not see the Lamb of God in the faces of those who do not look like us, speak like us, or behave like us, it’s because we’re looking for our own image in

others instead of looking for Christ, in whose image all are created.

To hear and see Christ we will need to change how we hear and see, and thanks be to God for people like Martin Luther King, Jr., who taught us how to look with fresh eyes and to hear with listening ears, the truth of the Gospel. May our sensibilities be continually challenged by and conformed to the way of Love, so that the violence and pain of this world no longer holds sway over our imaginations, but the peace of Christ reign supreme in our hearts as we attend to Christ in all things. *Amen.*