

## One More Step

A Homily by Rev. Betty Kornitzer

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Open with audio tape of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking on Love.

Listening to the stirring words of Dr. King, just now, I started to wonder. “Well, okay, Betty- how are you going to follow that?” For sure it’s not easy, but I will do my nest to honor Dr. King, one of my true heroes.

It was a couple of weeks ago that I borrowed this set of audio tapes from the library. Since then, I’ve been mesmerized, listening to the original recordings of many of Dr. King’s speeches. They have become the background music in my life of late – that tune that won’t go away, that you can’t stop humming.

I have sat in my car and listened, hour after hour. I have smile and cried and cried and smiled.

Mostly I have simply felt profoundly grateful, like I’m sitting in life’s classroom, being taught by the Dean of Love. For, as a man of faith, Love was the singular force behind King’s life. In *The Rebel*, Albert Camus writes of “an unswerving arrow, a shaft that is inflexible and free.” And Love was the bow that released Dr. King into the world – “an unswerving arrow – a shaft, inflexible and free.”

King was a man of such clear and wide ad hopeful vision. This was a true believer. A Man to follow. But, just how do we follow an unswerving arrow?

We follow him by truly listening to his message without flinching. For while Dr. King’s words are beautiful and inspiring, they also sting with the intensity of unfettered truth. This morning we have listened to Dr King talk of Love as a moral imperative. Of Love he said:

*“Agape is a Love that seeks nothing in return. It is an overflowing Love, it’s what theologians call the Love of God working in the lives of men. And when you rise to love on this level, you begin to love men not because they are likeable, but because God loves them...And you refuse to do anything that would defeat an individual because you have agape in your soul.”*

We re being called to embrace and live into a profoundly *demanding* love. We are called to embody Love within the very cells of our beings. This is a Love that humbles us – it unmask all the posturing of superficial rectitude.

Like an arrow, King pierces the thin veil of our proud and self-conscious Love. And then – unswerving – he demonstrates *Agape*: “the Love of God working in the lives of human beings...*ALL* human beings.”

King's vision of Beloved Community was built on a foundation of non-violent resistance. This was central to King's demanding concept of love. Some in those days flinched, they advocated for riots and revolution. King insisted on the more challenging course of non-violence. He said: "Hatred cannot drive out hatred, only Love can do that." King was talking about Love married to power. Liberals often shun the notion of power, believing it to be adverse to their values. Not so, my friends.

Dr King said: "One of the greatest problems of history is that the concepts of Love and Power are usually contrasted as polar opposites. Love identified with a resignation of Power, and Power with a denial of Love...What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that Love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is Love implementing the demands of justice."

King's activism joined Love and Power. He spoke of the "urgency of now," saying "Love won't wait, justice won't wait."

My friends, can we see that:

- That today, justice making is about Love;
- That today, feeding the hungry is about Love;
- That today, housing the poor is about Love;
- That today, securing equal employment is about Love;
- That today, safeguarding our planet's natural resources is about Love, and
- That today, demanding equal voting rights is about Love – yes even today this crusade is not won!

For the sake of Love, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. scholar, pastor, activist and Nobel Laureate, was beaten, spat upon and jailed twenty-nine times. He never flinched or recoiled from the demands that Love made upon his life. His civil disobedience was an act of Love

My friends – as a faith community, let us not be content to praise the man. Let us emulate his deeds with the 'urgency of now.'" Let us be about the business of active justice making. For the sake of Love, let us make noise and take risks. In the face of injustice, let us be civil and also disobedient. I pray for the courage and the wisdom to discern the ways of Love and Power.



In April, 1968, Dr. King traveled to Memphis, Tennessee to support a strike of that city's sanitation workers. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, he addressed the strikers saying:

“Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.  
Longevity has its place.  
But I'm not concerned about that now.  
I just want to do God's will.  
And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain.  
And I've looked over.  
And I've seen the promised land.  
I may not get there with you.  
But I want you to know tonight,  
that we, as a people will get to the promised land.”

The next day, standing on the balcony of his motel, Dr. King was assassinated, and as a nation, our knees buckled under the pain of our loss.



Dear friends, I pray that we stand with Martin, and unflinching, let the unswerving arrow of his life pierce our hearts with the urgency of now.

I pray that we may join hands as one people –  
rich and poor, brown and white of every hue,  
Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jew, people of all faiths and people of no faith. Let us join hands today,

Let us strive to go up to the mountain,  
and with the sheer force and Power of our Love  
May we work to establish ourselves in that promised land.

Oh, friends, May it be so, May it be so  
-Blessed Be and Amen