

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/mood-swings/201201/martin-luther-king-depressed-and-creatively-maladjusted>

January 21, 2018

Mark 1:14-20

“Creatively Maladjusted”

I may be a few days off from Monday’s holiday, but I would like to share a Facebook post that was written recently by David Cole of Miami, Florida about the inspiration and resiliency he draws from Martin Luther King, Jr.

Cole writes:

He [Martin Luther King, Jr.] was a lifelong depressive, having first attempted suicide before 10. Although he graduated with a Doctorate before 30, he didn't get hired as a Dean of Students at Xavier U., because he "didn't have the qualities of a leader". Friends and family dissuaded his relationship with his white girlfriend because stuff like that could get a black man hanged. He smoked like a chimney, and could play pool till dawn--much to the displeasure of his father with whom he argued over his life's direction.

From ages 26 to 39 he led a public life while he continued to struggle personally. He was picked to lead the Montgomery boycott largely because he was new in town. He turned down an enriching book and speaking deal early on and would die with \$5000 to his family's name. Drama at his church. Strain in the marriage. Hated by as many who loved him...and the realization that he would likely not see 40. He did not see 40.

Martin Luther King, Jr, is a hero not because he was brilliant, but because he decided to say yes to things that benefitted others more than it would him. it. He is great not because of some inaccessible quality, but because he decided that GIVING was as important as having. Imagine if he'd stayed in Boston married that girlfriend and became the academic. Imagine if he had taken that HUGE book/speaking deal rather than march on. Imagine if he let his depression take him. Imagine if he thought more about him less about us. Many of us don't have to Imagine because we do it all the time.

Let's do this--this year as we mark 50 years since this flawed, BEAUTIFUL man was killed fighting for you (and if you want a more perfect union, he was fighting for you), let's take him down from the rarified air of worship. Let's ground him to the foundation of example. Let's do what he did--work for a better world. You don't have to go broke or risk your life--don't worry. But speaking Truth to power, resisting intolerance, seeking and promoting solutions, and wait for it...ACTIVELY LOVING EACH OTHER is a pretty good start.

Cole continues with a personal connection, saying: *My mother used to keep a picture of King next to a picture of her grandmother and me. When at five I asked who he was she calmly said, "He is what Mama told me we all should be--a light and help unto others." She said he worked to make my life easier in a hard world and one day I will get to do the same in big ways or small--it don't matter, as long as you do something for somebody"...Imagine our world, filled with people living those truths: We should be of service. You can be of service.*

And he concludes with this: *Brother Martin. Thank you for your example of stepping up despite the twists, despite the storms. More than ever, we need to DO what you and countless others have done to conquer the darkness. Rest easy, we'll take it from here.*

I share this message with you about Dr. King – because he wasn't the first and won't be the last to be despised for preaching a message of repentance to those who have obstructed justice, and for offering forgiveness to the pool playing, cigarette smoking, depression suffering, long oppressed outcasts of this world. The “good news” preachers time and again get arrested like John the Baptist, or get crucified like Jesus, or are murdered like Dr. King. And the good news that would be amazing and transformative gets tamed down and trampled by those who would want to see the harder aspects of it put to rest.

The gospel writer Mark, in his own fiery style of getting the word out, minces no words and adds no fluff to his story. Boom, boom, boom – you get the point. Preaching baptism and the Holy Spirit will get you thrown in jail. Receiving the Holy Spirit might send you out to meet the devil in the desert. And turning toward these ideals will set you on a path of both ultimate joy and incredible frustration.

This is where we come in. Do we dare to say “yes” to following in this path? Do we, like Simon, Andrew, James, and John leave our former lives behind to follow the path of repentance, forgiveness, and announcing that the Kingdom of God is not relegated to some distant future or something to discover when we die. It’s here. It’s near. And it depends on us to bring it about. Will we be the ones to step up, despite the twists, despite the storms, to be partners with Christ and work on conquering the darkness?

In reading even more about Dr. King this week, I learned from Nassir Ghaemi, writing in *Psychology Today*, that King had an understanding about how his depression made him inclined to be a sensitive and dramatic leader in the Civil Rights movement. In a sermon Dr. King gave, he said, “Everybody passionately seeks to be well-adjusted, but there are some things in our world to which men of good will must be maladjusted....Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” Creatively maladjusted. Yes. I think that describes John and his camel hair coat and wild-man style. Creatively maladjusted. That describes Jesus and his willingness to lay down his life to demonstrate that there are forces of love greater than death. Creatively maladjusted.

But the truth is, I like being adjusted and part of the normal world, most of us do. Especially in our younger years, most of us try desperately to fit in, to seem like everyone else, and even as adults it can make us uncomfortable to feel different, to be somehow abnormal, even

if it's for the sake of something creative and life-giving. To say yes, not only to belief in Jesus, but to following Jesus may put us on a path we didn't necessarily want to travel. We may not be as comfortable, as prosperous, or as normal as other people. We may put ourselves or our loved ones in danger. I hope not, but we might. As Mr. Cole says, we don't have to go broke or risk our lives. *That's probably true.* But what we can do is work to make the world a better place, and be willing to be considered a bit weird, or off, or creatively maladjusted to do so. It's even OK to get down about the state of things. In fact, it matters that the conditions of our world can affect us, moods and all, because that's how change gets made.

How are we creatively maladjusted???

Reflections on our work as a church/as individuals...