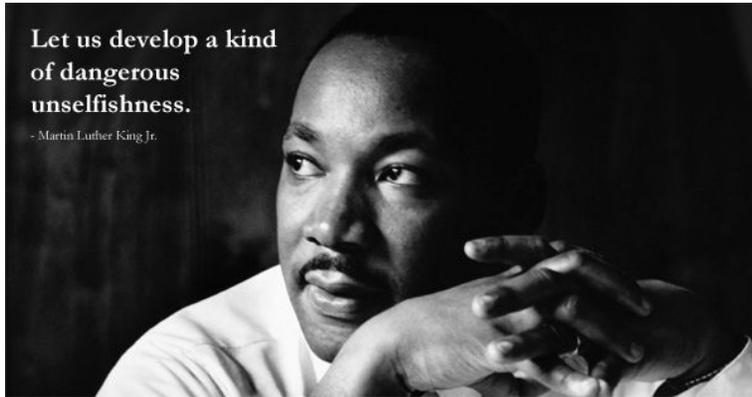


**I've Been to the Mountaintop**  
**By Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**Isaiah 62: 1-5**



*For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be*

*called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. 3 You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah,<sup>[a]</sup> and your land Beulah<sup>[b]</sup>; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married. 5 As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.*

*Yesterday, I attended the Women's March in New York City. I'm not sure which one I attended, but I marched. As I marched I looked at the signs people were carrying. They were signs expressing frustration, and anger, and hope. As I marched I noticed that some of the people marching were there for themselves and some of them were marching for others. As a "non woman" I was marching for women who felt left behind or short changed. Perhaps they felt Desolate...or Forsaken, like the people Isaiah was addressing.*

*On April 3, 1968 Martin Luther King spoke of similar feelings and similar*

*circumstances in our country. It was a time of great division in the United States, and he expressed his hope in the following sermon entitled, I've Been to the Mountaintop. In the interest of time, I will share with you some excerpts from that sermon:*

I'm delighted to see each of you here tonight in spite of a storm warning. You reveal that you are determined [Audience:] (*Right*) to go on anyhow. (*Yeah, All right*) Something is happening in Memphis, something is happening in our world. And you know, if I were standing at the beginning of time with the possibility of taking a kind of general and panoramic view of the whole of human history up to now, and the Almighty said to me, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?" I would take my mental flight by Egypt And in spite of its magnificence, I wouldn't stop there. (*All right*)

I would move on by Greece, and take my mind to Mount Olympus. And I would see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, But I wouldn't stop there. (*Oh yeah*)

I would go on even to the great heyday of the Roman Empire (*Yes*), and I would see developments around there, through various emperors and leaders. But I wouldn't stop there. (*Keep on*)

I would come on up even to 1863 and watch a vacillating president by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. But I wouldn't stop there. (*Yeah*)  
[*Applause*]

Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty and say, "If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the twentieth century, I will be happy." [Applause]

Now that's a strange statement to make because the world is all messed up. The nation is sick, trouble is in the land, confusion all around. That's a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars. (*All right, Yes*) And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men in some strange way are responding. Something is happening in our world. (*Yeah*) The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee, the cry is always the same: "We want to be free." [Applause]

And another reason I'm happy to live in this period is that we have been forced to a point where we are going to have to grapple with the problems that men have been trying to grapple with through history, but the demands didn't force them to do it. Survival demands that we grapple with them. (*Yes*) Men for years now have been talking about war and peace. But now no longer can they just talk about it. It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's nonviolence or nonexistence. That is where we are today. [Applause]

And also, in the human rights revolution, if something isn't done and done in a hurry to bring the colored peoples of the world out of their long years of poverty; their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed. (*All right*) [Applause] Now I'm just happy that God has allowed me to live in

this period, to see what is unfolding. And I'm happy that he's allowed me to be in Memphis. (*Oh yeah*)

I can remember [*Applause*], I can remember when Negroes were just going around, as Ralph has said so often, scratching where they didn't itch and laughing when they were not tickled. [*Laughter, applause*] But that day is all over. (*Yeah*) [*Applause*] We mean business now and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world. (*Yeah*) [*Applause*] And that's all this whole thing is about. We aren't engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. (*Yeah*) We are saying [*Applause*], we are saying that we are God's children. (*Yeah*) [*Applause*] And if we are God's children, we don't have to live like we are forced to live. Now what does all this mean in this great period of history? It means that we've got to stay together. (*Yeah*) We've got to stay together and maintain unity. You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a favorite, favorite formula of doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. [*Applause*] But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery. [*Applause*] Now let us maintain unity.

Secondly, let us keep the issues where they are. (*Right*) The issue is injustice. The issue is the refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest in its dealings with its public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers.

[*Applause*] Now we've got to keep attention on that. (*That's right*) That's always the problem with a little violence. You know what happened the other day, and the press dealt only with the window breaking. (*That's right*) I read the articles. They very seldom got around to mentioning the fact that 1,300 sanitation workers are on strike, and that Memphis is not being fair to them, and that Mayor Loeb is in dire need of a doctor. They didn't get around to that. (*Yeah*) [*Applause*]

Now we're going to march again, and we've got to march again (*Yeah*), in order to put the issue where it is supposed to be (*Yeah*) [*Applause*] and force everybody to see that there are thirteen hundred of God's children here suffering (*That's right*), sometimes going hungry, going through dark and dreary nights wondering how this thing is going to come out. That's the issue. (*That's right*) And we've got to say to the nation, we know how it's coming out. For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory. [*Applause*]

Now let me say as I move to my conclusion that we've got to give ourselves to this struggle until the end. (*Amen*) Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point in Memphis. We've got to see it through. [*Applause*] And when we have our march, you need to be there. If it means leaving work, if it means leaving school, be there. [*Applause*] Be concerned about your brother. You may not be on strike (*Yeah*), but either we go up together or we go down together. [*Applause*] Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness.

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 (*That's right*), and show him that he knew a little more than Jesus knew and throw him off base. [*He asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Knowing full well the answer to that question as it was prescribed by the Law. He asked, with a certain smug look on his face, "Who is my neighbor?"*] Now that question could have easily ended up in a philosophical and theological debate. But Jesus immediately pulled that question from midair and placed it on a dangerous curve between Jerusalem and Jericho. (*Yeah*) And he talked about a certain man who fell among thieves. (*Sure*) You remember that a Levite (*Sure*) and a priest passed by on the other side; they didn't stop to help him. Finally, a man of another race came by. (*Yes sir*) 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.

It's possible that those (*other*) men were afraid. You see, the Jericho Road is a dangerous road. (*That's right*) 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. (*Go ahead*) Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking (*Yeah*), 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. (*Oh yeah*) 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?" (*All right*)

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?" That's the question before you tonight. (Yes) Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to my job?" Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?" (Yes) The question is not, "If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?" The question is, "If I do *not* stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?" That's the question. [*Applause*]

Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge, to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. (*Amen*)....

...Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop.

And I don't mind.

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!

And so I'm happy, tonight.

I'm not worried about anything.

I'm not fearing any man!

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!!

The next day, MLK was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, TN.

He did not reach that promised land, but his words and the spirit behind those words live on as we make our way...

To which I will add: In that day, *No longer will they call (us) Deserted, or name (our) land Desolate. But (we) will be called "My Delight is in Her"<sup>[a]</sup> and your land Beulah<sup>[b]</sup>; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married. Amen.*