

Sunday, January 19, 2025 am

## **Learning From Our Calendar (2)**

### **All One In Christ Jesus – Galatians 3:27-38**

#### **(Martin Luther King Day)**

This year, I have announced that I am going to preach through the calendar. This will be an ongoing study addressing various holidays and observance we make throughout the year. As stated in my introductory lesson, this is not about observing these days as the church, but because these days bring various subjects to our minds, I find it fitting to address these subjects from a Biblical standpoint. It is with this in mind that I would like to address Martin Luther King Day.

#### **I. The “holiday”**

- a. Purpose – tomorrow, in the United States, is “Martin Luther King Jr Day”. It is a holiday encouraging Americans to appreciate the efforts he made to improve race relations and human equality. The goal of this day is to encourage us to treat each other with kindness, regardless of our differences. It was first observed January 20, 1986 and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of January each year.
- b. NOTE: As the church, we do not honor any man except Jesus. Matthew 16:18 – it is His church and He its head (Ephesians 1:22-23). But we can recognize good qualities and accomplishments that others have done. We do find that throughout scripture. Many NT letters recognize individuals for their accomplishments both good (e.g., Romans 16:1-16) and bad (e.g., 3 John 9-11, 2 Timothy 4:14). We can learn from them (Hebrews 6:12 – imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 2 Corinthians 8:1-3ff, etc.).
- c. A little about Dr. King. He was born January 15, 1929 as Michael King Jr. in Atlanta, GA. After his father returned from a trip to Germany in 1934, He changed both his and his son’s name to Martin Luther King, after the reformation leader who stood up to the corruption of Catholicism. He was a highly educated Baptist preacher. Of course, MLKJr was known for his activism to end discrimination laws including voting rights, segregation in the south, labor rights and other racial inequities. He paid a great price for his stands including being arrested 29 times, violently attacked, and ultimately assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, TN. During his life he advocated passive resistance.
- d. I certainly would not agree with many of his doctrinal beliefs nor some of his methods he used, but he addressed a serious and sinful condition that was prevalent in our society during his life, and to a degree is still an issue.

#### **II. Lessons to consider:**

- a. With these thoughts in mind, let us consider some Biblical lessons we can learn from this holiday. In particular we want to notice why racism is sinful and contrary to God’s word.
- b. **All men are made in the image of God**
  - i. EVERY man is – Genesis 1:26-27. He is the one that made us each of us different.
  - ii. Genesis 11 – the tower of Babel is likely why we are so different throughout the world. But we are ALL made in His image.
  - iii. Acts 17:26 – yet we are all “from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth.” Human blood is just that. It is different from that of every animal. It makes

us all human. NOTE: IF one needs blood to save their lives, the blood TYPE is an important factor, but race (or nationality) is not an element of that factor.

**c. Every human being has worth –**

- i. Again, we are made in the image of God. Genesis 2:7 tells us that after man was formed God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. The fact that God created us, give us life and so many qualities after His image tells us that we are of great worth.
- ii. Genesis 9:6 – whoever sheds man’s blood was to pay for it with his blood. Why? “*For in the image of God He made man.*”
- iii. Not only were we made alive in His image, we have a soul that will spend eternity everywhere. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 notes, *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* While the terms spirit and soul and used interchangeably, this text is clear that man has something that no other living creature has. Consider Ecclesiastes 3:21 & 12:7. James 1:21 speaks of our souls being saved.
- iv. Because we have a soul, we can be saved - John 3:16 – whoever believes in Him will be saved. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 – God desires ALL men to be saved.
- v. NOTE: Let me emphasize every one of these passages implies that EVERY person is valuable to God. Jesus even said so. Consider Matthew 6:25-26.

**d. The sin of partiality**

- i. Acts 10:34-35 – as Peter was teaching a Gentile, Cornelius he noted, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.
- ii. The Bible is clear that partiality is a sin - James 2:1-10. He is clear that to show partiality is sin. And while the text deals with social status, the principles clearly apply to any partiality.
- iii. Galatians 2:11-12 – Paul condemned Peter for showing partiality when his Jewish brethren were around. This says something about selective partiality. Note also
- iv. Racism is a form of partiality – and it is baseless, as you are judging one’s worth (see the last point) based upon skin pigment and not moral standards or one’s abilities. James 3:8-9 warns against the one who blesses and curses out of the same mouth. 1 John 4:20-21 speaks of the one who professes to love God and yet hates his brother is a liar.
- v. Continually scripture emphasizes that what we look for in those we associate with is their moral conduct, NOT their appearance, especially outward appearance about which one has no control. Psalm 1:1 begins, “*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*” 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 calls for us to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers but to be separate. Ephesians 5:11 calls for us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. 1 Corinthians 15:33 notes that evil company corrupts good morals.
- vi. In his “I have a dream” speech delivered on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, August 28, 1963, Dr. King declared, *I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.* That needs to be our mantra as well. NOTE: Character does matter.
- vii. NOTE: Racial and ethnic partiality are sinful. And this is a two-way street. It is no more acceptable for a black person to discriminate against a white person than for a white

person to discriminate against a black person. Therefore, if you are an advocate BE CAREFUL who you align yourself with. We will NOT heal as a nation or people until we ALL get this point.

**e. Who is my neighbor?**

- i. 2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest commandment. Matthew 22:36-40 describes the first and second commandments. 1) Love God with your all; 2) Love your neighbor as yourself. Found in Leviticus 19:17-18 as part of the LOM. Galatians 5:14 notes that ALL the law is fulfilled in that one word, love your neighbor as yourself. James 2:8 called it the royal law.
- ii. Luke 10:25-37 – We recently studied the parable of the good Samaritan. The point was clear that your neighbor is ANYONE you have the opportunity to help. Implied in the text is how a Samaritan (despised by Jews) was willing to help a Jew.
- iii. 1 John 3:15 warns us that if we hate our brother we are as a murderer (to God – cf. Matthew 5:21-22).

**f. Love your enemies –**

- i. **Matthew 5:44-48**. I am NOT implying that someone of another race is your enemy.
- ii. This is in response to those who do not “get it” and choose to hate regardless of the reason. As Christians, we cannot hate in return. We cannot respond in kind.
- iii. Just prior to His address on loving enemies Jesus said that if an evil person strikes you, turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39ff).
- iv. Romans 12:14-21 – call for us to bless those who persecute you. As much as possible, live peaceably with all men. Let God take vengeance.
- v. In the matter of race relations, and many other dividing issues (politics, ethnicity, social status, religion, etc.) I have seen incredibly bad and sinful behavior on both sides. My simple plea is this – do not be part of anything that is sinful or places a bad light upon Christ and His church (2 Cor. 6:17, Romans 2:24, 1 Timothy 6:1, etc.).

**g. The pursuit of unity –**

- i. My final point is a call for unity of God’s people. We need to be strive for unity with each other (Ephesians 4:1-3). Romans 14:19 calls for us to pursue those things which make for peace and edification.
- ii. Psalm 133:1, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!* This is followed by descriptions of things that ought to be pleasant to us.
- iii. IF we cannot be united together as brethren, how will we be a light to the world to encourage them toward unity – John 13:34-35.
- iv. But this unity is not limited to brethren.
  1. Consider Hebrews 12:14 says, *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*
  2. Romans 15:2 notes, *Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.*
  3. We cannot let faulty judgment of others keep us from reaching out to them. We cannot let a poor example toward one another keep us from being able to reach others.

As you listen to the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr, you will find he addressed these subjects. And it is my hope that in these matters, we can find reminders of how God wants us to behave toward all mankind. I want to encourage us to pause and ask if we are treating everyone the way that we ought to. One day we will

all stand before God in judgment and give an accounting. The righteous will spend eternity with Him – and their outward appearance will be of NO consequence. And if that doesn't matter to God, does it matter to you? I conclude with Galatians 3:26-29, *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Let us consider these things as we strive to live for Him and broaden the borders of His kingdom. Think about it!