
What is Your Moment in Your Time?

A sermon by CanonCarolynne Williams
Epiphany 2 – Year B

Two and one-half months ago, I received an invitation to give a “lecture” to a class of eighteen students and three teachers, including the upper school chaplain at the Westminster Schools.

My participation was to share my story as a product of the civil rights era.

Initially, when asked, I did not know whether to be insulted because I was going to have to reveal my age, officially, or to view this opportunity as an opportunity. After all, when looking at the civil rights era of the 1960s, I was a teenager, if one can imagine that. But upon reflection, it was almost fifty years ago.

My assignment was to discuss the influence of music; pop, folk songs, freedom songs, and spirituals through word and music.

The students who registered for this class are participating in a month long study of the events and happenings, and are traveling to sites both locally and close distances, reflecting this era in American history. This is to enhance and underscore what they were hearing in the classroom. By them viewing, hearing, and experiencing these places and their significance to this period of history, the students’ experience becomes much more than a theory. They are having the experiences *with all of their senses* to take in and give through their actions.

The students will accomplish their own goals, which have been set for themselves through all of the fifty-five classes and its subject matter.

Theory is how some of us view our place of action today in living today. Theory is as far as we are willing to go. We sit with our theories about God and who God is in our lives and the place God occupies in our list of priorities.

We hear the word of God through scripture and song every Sunday and during the week. In our travels locally and to faraway places, our imaginations are called upon to fill the gap that spans our mind between what may have happened over two thousand years ago and how that relates to what is happening in our world today.

We, as Christians, have the example of Samuel, during ancient times, hearing a call from God as we heard in our Old Testament lesson. “Samuel had a delayed recognition of God’s voice and his *own* submission” (Feasting on the Word, pg. 244). Samuel was a young man when he finally heard the call upon his life.

He became more intimate in being in relationship with God and became more fully awake. Even though visions were not widespread during Samuel’s time and most miracles had already happened, Samuel heard and responded to his call.

God’s call to Samuel was for Samuel through Eli. His call is an example to us today in terms of suggesting that knowing the God that we serve is the same God Samuel responded to his call.

The God we serve today is the same God Moses responded to. The God we serve today is the same God we are expected to build and have an intimate relationship with, in our time.

How do we go into action and allow our learning about God and the events of this, “our time,” to enable us to respond to

the events, happenings, and places close and far away?

How are our hearts being enlightened, our minds quickened, and our bodies and spirits totally involved? So we can have GOD in our lives as more than a theory.

In my sharing my story, my experience of being a “product of the civil rights era and all that time entailed” and the response of my living and moving and having my being in service to God through others, is my response leading toward my living and your living and our living together as being more than a theory.

The God we pray to and have an intimate relationship with is more than a theory. We experience the love of God always. We experience the love of God in the midst of, and it is the same GOD that allows us to have the freedom to move and be and come together in community to see clearly that God is more than a theory, I pray.

As we look at the life of MLK on tomorrow in terms of history being recognized millions will recall, remembering to give homage to our creator in continuing to lean toward peace and freedom for all.

We are reminded of the theory of the time and where this theory, this vision being put into action almost fifty years ago, started. It began long before my time and your time. I believe that this servant of God, MLK, through others had to have had an intimate relationship with God. I believe that this servant of God prayed without ceasing. God was at the center of his life. This means that God through the presence of the Holy Spirit through others across the spectrum of humanity, was at the very core of his being. This was the inward building of a love for GOD that paralleled nothing else in his life. His theory about human dignity for everyone being recognized and reflected in the change in the laws of this land came with the call upon his life as he sat at his kitchen table in his home. A telephone call came into his home in the middle of the night. He was told what would happen to his home and his family if he did not leave Montgomery.

“Shaken, King went to the kitchen, made himself a cup of coffee, but soon buried his face in his hands. He began to pray aloud. He later explained what happened next; he said, I could hear an inner voice saying to me, “Martin Luther” stand up for truth, stand up for justice, stand up for righteousness.”

Upon Dr. King’s death, as I sat in my dormitory window in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall and watch thousands of people from around the world stand in line to view the body of MLK as it lay in state on the campus of Spelman, I looked at the people from all walks of life, from all corners of the world, coming to pay their respects, and as I shared with these eighteen students and they shared with me their view of the world and all that they see in the peoples of the world and as I think of Samuel as a young man during ancient times, I pray to you God for all of humanity and am thankful for the response of Samuel and of MLK and of the students who are preparing themselves to take their places in this world.

We are indeed a community, striving, suffering, celebrating, and responding to the place from which we have come and looking forward to a better world. With prayer and learning and being and action in God’s world as God’s servants, it is happening and will continue to happen, and peace will no longer be a theory for all.

Amen.