

Justice

Isaiah 1:17, Micah 6:8

Over several centuries people have stood for Justice. Not just since the time of the Christ but throughout our history. Many have faced danger and or death for doing so. When many of us were growing up, we stood each morning in school and recited the Pledge of Allegiance, part of which states we are one nation under God, indivisible, with justice and liberty for all.

Is that true? Are we that nation? Look around and be honest, are we?

Or is that just for people who look like us, love like us, think like us and smell like us?

Listen to stories about of three men who believed in justice for all.

Gandhi was a practicing Hindu, but Christianity intrigued him. In his reading of the Gospels, Gandhi was impressed by Jesus whom Christians worshiped and followed. He wanted to know more about this Jesus that Christians referred to as “the Christ, the Messiah.”

This is a true story: One Sunday morning Gandhi decided that he would visit one of the Christian churches in Calcutta. Upon seeking entrance to the church sanctuary, he was stopped at the door by the ushers.

He was told he was not welcome, nor would he be permitted to attend this particular church as it was for high-caste Indians and whites only. He was neither high caste, nor was he white. Because of the rejection, the Mahatma turned his back on Christianity.

With this act, Gandhi rejected the Christian faith, never again to consider the claims of Christ. He was turned off by the legalistic Christian sin of segregation

that was practiced by the church. It was due to this experience that Gandhi later declared, “I’d be a Christian if it were not for the Christians.”

Mahatma Gandhi was on his way to his daily prayer meeting in New Delhi when an assassin shot him on January 30, 1948

Rev. King didn't want to be involve in a national movement. He was a Pastor of a thriving Baptist Church. The movement came to him as a group that was looking for a leader and they found one in him.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr was an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968. King is best known for advancing civil rights through nonviolence.

On April 3, 1968 Rev. King gave his last sermon, saying, “We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop ... 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.”

Just after 6 pm on April 4, 1968, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is fatally shot while standing on the balcony outside his second-story room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. The civil rights leader was in Memphis to support a sanitation workers’ strike and was on his way to dinner when a bullet struck him in the jaw and severed his spinal cord. Rev. King was pronounced dead after his arrival at a Memphis hospital. He was 39 years old.

In eighteenth century, England the idea of faith existing outside the wall of the church was absolutely unheard of. One went to church, sang the hymns, prayed the prayers, heard the sermons, but there was nothing required of those who went once they left the building. No living your faith, no following the teachings of Jesus, no nothing once you walked out the doors, you were done with church for a week.

And even then only those who were able to dress properly, those who could afford the luxury of taking a day off work or had a way to get to the church could go. But over in Oxford something else was brewing.

A group of students and staff of the college were meeting and studying and discussing what worship could and should be. Their willingness to go beyond the walls to where the poor, the outcast and the imprisoned were breaking the normal social and political norms.

The group became known as the Holy Club, Bible moths (because they circled around the scripture as a moth drawn to flame), the Sacramentarians, eventually they were called Methodists and that name seems to have stuck.

The group began a prison ministry about 1730, taking food, drink, medicines and reading material to prisoners – and even began experimenting with legal advocacy for some prisoners. In 1732 a man named Thomas Blair was imprisoned for alleged same sex behavior; which at that time was a capital offence. A man from the Oxford group, named John Wesley, “marshalled his evidence” and began trying to “convince any reasonable man of his innocence.”

The day of the trial, Wesley rose at 4:00 AM and rode 12 miles horseback to be present. Mr. Blair was found guilty, but because of Wesley and his groups’ efforts, he was not sentenced to hang but fined 20 marks. Wesley and his group raised the money for the fine and Blair went free.

We don't have to look too far outside our own denomination to find such stories, they are in fact in our Methodist DNA

Now hear the reading of scripture. (Isaiah 1:17, Micah 5:8)

“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and please the widow's cause,” (Isaiah 1:17). “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Justice, what is it anyway. Not a dictionary meaning but a meaning you would apply to this word. We have seen two examples of men that stood up for a peaceful, kind and loving way of life. Rev. King's nonviolence saved many lives. He stood for Justice as he saw it from his God.

A lot of people stand up for justice that don't die because of it. One example is when in Galatians 2, Paul confronts Peter while they were living with the Gentiles. Then certain of the legalistic Christian showed up that couldn't let go of their old religious rules causing trouble. The Bible says some of them were hired to cause trouble. They felt you had to do certain things and follow certain rules that were apart of the Jewish religion to be a Christian. They tried to impose it on Christians that believe by faith only. Believing by faith; faith in Jesus the Christ only with no other rules. Believing by Faith only is the main stay of the Apostle Paul's teaching.

Peter left the Gentiles and Paul to associate with these legalistic Christian. Paul confronted Peter for this. Peter and Paul spent time together in Jerusalem. After this Peter went to the Jewish folks to teach them and Paul went to the Gentiles to teach them.

Justice is important to God. He talks about it all the time in His Word. If it's important to God then it should be important to us. This is about standing up for your beliefs. Some people die for theirs, some go to jail or die for theirs and some get into arguments over them like Peter and Paul.

Can we, will we and do we stand with God for His Justice for all as taught by Him in His Word? Do we show our stand to others by word and deed? Or do we just say the words?