

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, Year A: 16 January 2011

In my opinion, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech is one of the greatest in American History.

It so clearly and beautifully articulated not only his dream, but the people's dreams, dreams that I hope we all share – dreams of justice and equality and mutual respect; dreams of how the world can be, rather than how it sometimes is; dreams of letting freedom ring all across our land.

Reading the text does not do the speech justice.

You need to hear his voice –

sometimes slow and drawling, sometimes quick and fast-hitting.

You need to hear the way he used the phrase "I have a dream"

not just to begin each sentence, but by moving quickly

from one sentence into the next sentence and then pausing,

making it serve as both the end and the beginning of each idea.

If you haven't heard it recently, I encourage you to go online and find it.

The speech is filled with other powerful lines:

**We have come to this hallowed spot
to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now.**

And

We refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt.

A beautiful, articulate, and powerful speech.

My preaching professor taught us that a good sermon should have one function: to encourage the congregation, to challenge the hearers, or to teach the people.

Well, Dr. King did not follow these rules!

The "I Have A Dream" speech had way more than one function.

It encouraged the people to keep up the fight.

It assured the opposition that they would not give up.

It warned the people against violence and hatred and bitterness.

And most of all, it was a call.

It called the people to a journey that would not be easy,

but a journey that would change their lives – and the lives of those to come.

I am talking about Dr. King this morning in part because we honor him tomorrow, but also because his call to action shares some similarities

with our lectionary text for today, the call of two disciples.

Jesus asks them, "What are you seeking?"

That must have been a difficult question, because instead of answering they ask him, "Where are you staying?"

It is of course more than a question about his lodging.

"Where are you staying" doesn't mean sleeping -- it means *dwelling, abiding*.

They are asking, *Where is home?*

Where is the center of your life? And will I be welcome there?

This sermon was written by The Rev. Theo Park and delivered at Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing. Fr. Theo thanks all those whose material he has borrowed and apologizes to those he has overlooked.

Jesus' answer is simple: Come and see.
Come and see what I consider home.
Come and see whom I consider family.
Come and see what it means to follow me.
Come and see for yourself.

Come and see.
I think those are three of the most powerful words in the entire Gospels,
right up there with the other important three-word sentences,
"Jesus is born" and "Christ is risen."
Come and see.

Maybe we should write those three words above the doors to the sanctuary:
Come and see.
Are you looking for a church where you might be welcomed as you are?
Come and see.
Are you curious about the exciting things you hear happening
at that church on the green?
Come and see.
Are you looking for meaning, for answers, for it all to make sense?
Come and see. Come and see for yourself.

We don't have all the answers – in fact, we have lots of questions ourselves.
But we'll add your questions to our questions and we'll all "Come and see" together.
Maybe we should write those three words on the front of our Bibles: *Come and see.*
Come and see what others saw when they went looking for God.
Come and see how others interpreted the events in their lives...
They may have gotten it right, or they may have gotten it wrong,
but come and see for yourself.
Come and see if there might be a different way of reading scripture
than you were taught.
Come and see if you might discover grace instead of condemnation.
Come and see if you might find direction for your life, motivation for your ministry,
rejuvenation for your work.
Come and see.

Maybe we should write those three words on the doors of our homes, inside and out,
so that every time we come home and every time we leave
we will remember the invitation.
Come and see God at work in your own family.
Or come and see God present with you in the quiet, empty rooms.
Whether you are entering or leaving, come and see God in the faces you meet.

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Maybe we should write those three words on the dashboards of our cars, on our bookbags or briefcases, on our office desks or work stations or tucked in the pocket of our uniform.

Come and see. Come and see what God might do.

Come and see, Jesus said to the newcomers, and they followed – not with great faith and not even without fear.

But the invitation was impossible to resist.

A man I know tells a story about a different kind of invitation.

He had just checked into a hotel on one of his many trips, and as he stepped into the elevator he saw a handwritten note:

Party tonight! Room 210, 8:00. Everyone invited!

He imagined Room 210 at 8:00 "filled with an odd assortment of people: traveling salesmen looking for relief from the tedium, tourists bored with sightseeing, wary hotel employees checking out what was going on.

It turns out the notice was a hoax.

--I'm guessing it was a joke played on some newlyweds!--

but the idea is authentic:

a party to which everybody is invited, where there's no dress code and no cover charge, and all are welcome and no one is turned away.

A party where it doesn't matter nearly as much what gets us in the door, as what will happen to us after we arrive.

If there is to be such a party, the church is going to have to throw it.

Nobody else can.

Nobody else will.

It is up to us to extend the invitation...and to mean it.

Dr. King lamented that the church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound.

It need not be that way.

The sound can be strong and effective and sure:

Come and see.

Come and see, Jesus says.

Come and see for yourself.

Come and see love.

Come and see God.

Come as you are.

Just come.

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