

“Freedom (No More Shackles)” with Gate Church (Eddie James)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcj7c6Wvg\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcj7c6Wvg_o)

“I’m Free” with Liz Yancey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6dyNvpYV2s>

“I’m Free” with Lynda Randle and David Phelps

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tg551q9wt1o>

“A Change Is Gonna Come” with Sam Cooke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOpn2dtVpYo>

“Woke Up This Morning” with John Legend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opOVElQFNMs>

“Woke Up This Morning With My Mind Stayed on Jesus”  
with Mavis Staples

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7V-4sBpEzU>

“Til the Storm Passes By” with Lynda Randle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onKcYFQfe3A>

“Redemption Song” with John Legend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrFrygkDCIA>

“Love Lifted Me” with Hezekiah Walker and the Love  
Fellowship Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE2bstetDHg>

“Love Medley” with God’s Chosen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ3VhFsqHSU>

“My Life, My Love, My All” with Kirk Franklin

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6SmnB\\_MUqo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6SmnB_MUqo)

“Don’t Cry” with Kirk Franklin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnAtsV-fxj4>

“Bridge Over Troubled Water” with John Legend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnCHCqYRQFs>

“Nobody Like You Lord / He’s Able” with Maranda Curtis Willis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTdaoJnfBA>

“Break Every Chain” with Tasha Cobbs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vjlp9i2Bg>

“Glory” with Legend and Common

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx_o)

## **Claiming the Unsearchable Riches of Christ’s Love *Ephesians 3***

Today is Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday. Happy Birthday, Dr. King! I think that Dr. King would encourage us today with words similar to that of Paul to the Ephesians saying, “*I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory,*” *Ephesians 3:13*.

Just as Paul suffered imprisonment and was sent out of many cities like Ephesus for turning people away from financially enriching idol worship, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested 30 times and assassinated while marching for sanitation workers exactly a year after he urged the United States to end its war in Vietnam.

We should imagine what it must have been like for Paul to present the Gospel to Gentiles who saw Jews as the bottom rung of the Roman Empire. What could a half Jewish person like Paul have to say to a Gentile about a crucified Jew who Paul claimed could save their lives?

Most people would have overlooked Paul's message because of who he was. This is how President-Elect Donald Trump overlooked Representative John Lewis' criticism that Donald Trump did not legitimately win the election. Donald Trump overlooked the merits of John Lewis' statements about Russian hacking and reminded the country on Twitter that Representative John Lewis represented a district that was unsafe and in bad financial shape. There was no need to hear what he had to say.

But still, I hope that John Lewis speaks out.

Paul believed that despite his race and his own personal sins, God called him to speak out about Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."* Ephesians 3:8

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached among all Americans the unsearchable riches of Christ, despite how the United States treated black people. Dr. King preached that the United States could truly be born again with the ethic of who Jesus was and how Jesus lived.

Dr. King urged us to live based on love. Dr. King reminded us that Jesus told us *to love our enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you,* Matthew 5:44.

Dr. King spoke of this love as "an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. Theologians would say that it is the love of God operating in the human heart. So that when one rises to love on this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because their ways appeal to him, but he

loves every man because God loves him. And he rises to the point of loving the person who does an evil deed while hating the deed that the person does.” (“Love, Law and Civil Disobedience” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. by James M. Washington, HarperCollins: 1986, pp. 46-47)

Dr. King believed that this love could help people dismantle the systems that oppressed us rather than the misguided people who hurt us. Dr. King said that “one seeks to defeat the unjust system, rather than individuals who are caught in that system....The thing to do is to get rid of the system and thereby create a moral balance within society.” (p. 47)

Dr. King believed that nonviolent love could innovate creative solutions in a way that violence and the threat of force could not. Dr Kings said: “[V]iolence says that suffering can be a powerful social force by inflicting suffering on another. The nonviolent say that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept that violence on yourself, so that self-suffering stands at the center of the nonviolent movement and the individuals involved are able to suffer in a creative manner, feeling that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that suffering may serve to transform the social situation.” (p. 47)

Dr. King acknowledged that not all people are good and respond positively to love. All of us are bad in some ways. But Dr. King said that the “nonviolent resister never lets this idea go, that there is something within human nature that can respond to goodness.... And so the individuals who believe in this movement and who believe in nonviolence and our struggle in the South, somehow believe that even the worst segregationist can become an integrationist.”

Dr. King believed in this love in all its ways and thus also believed that love gave us the power and the moral responsibility to refuse to cooperate with evil.

“Noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as the cooperation with good.” (p. 48)

Like Paul, Dr. King also asserted to everyone in the United States that the victory of Jesus over death on the cross was evidence that God was always on the side of truth and justice. Dr. King said that “[t]hose of us who call the name of Jesus Christ find something at the center of our faith which forever reminds us that God is on the side of truth and justice. Good Friday may occupy the throne for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumph of Easter. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but that same Christ arose and split history into A.D. and B.C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. Yes, ‘the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.’ There is something in this universe which justifies William Cullen Bryant in saying, Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” (“The Current Crisis in Race Relations” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. by James M. Washington, HarperCollins: 1986, p. 88)

Dr. King wanted us to understand that if we ever believed that every life was sacred, we could transform the world. “In Christ there is neither male nor female. In Christ there is neither Communist nor capitalist. In Christ, somehow, there is neither bound nor free. We are all one in Christ Jesus. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won’t exploit people, we won’t trample over people with the iron feet of oppression, we won’t kill anybody.” (p. 255)

Love is a powerful force in the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yes, many people shunned Dr. King’s ideas and ridiculed his reliance on love and on Jesus.

But look at what Dr. King suffered through to show us. Dr. King suffered through dogs and jail in Birmingham to

transform this city known as “Bombingham” for its terror to black people. Dr. King challenged the war in Vietnam so that many future generations could believe that we could stop war and find better alternatives.

Dr. King’s tribulations are our glory and great opportunity today. Dr. King would say as Paul said and pray as Paul prayed that we would not faint at the work of living in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Dr. King would pray with Paul in saying: *“14 I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

*16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

*17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

*18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

*19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God, Ephesians 3:14-19.”*

Have an MLK Day filled with love and hope!

Tobias Pinckney, Powered to Witness University, 1/15/17

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