

MADE FOR THIS: RESPONDING TO EVIL AND SUFFERING

Scripture used: [Judges 6:11-14 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon led us into the second message of the “Made for This” series on the eve of the national holiday honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King’s life’s work embodied the love of Jesus. His conduct and his leadership during the Montgomery bus boycott offer a basic answer to a simple question: how does our faith equip us to confront evil and suffering? This question is so relevant today. When facing the news from Ukraine, the omnipresent gun violence in the US, and other ills and misfortunes, how do we reconcile that with the existence of a benevolent God? Pastor Tim Keller has answers in his excellent book “The Reason for God”. Our faith empowers us to engage evil. In our scripture today, Gideon is trapped in an unending cycle of evil and suffering, and gets firm direction from God on how to break the cycle.

KEY POINTS

1. On December 1st, 1955, Rosa Parks started the movement to reform the Montgomery public transport system with her courageous act of civil disobedience against an unjust law. The boycott was painful and traumatic, and eventually resulted in the Supreme Court desegregating the system, an historic victory. The system forbade black bus drivers, although 70% of the ridership was black. Black riders had to surrender their seats to whites. Many black passengers were treated with great indignity by drivers. Through Dr. King’s leadership and the sacrifice of the African-American community, a coalition was formed across race and class to stand against racism and injustice and to work for generational change. NBCC is a part of this redemptive legacy.
2. Dr. King’s example is a real-life expression of the Biblical example found in the story of Gideon. Gideon was surrounded by trauma and oppression. He asked questions we all have asked. “Why has this happened to us?” “Where are the miracles?” He was struggling with faith, and in need of fresh revelation. In response, he is told “The Lord is with you.” Dr. King asked these questions - about the depth and substance of his faith in view of the bleak reality on the ground. In his speech at Boston University, Dr. King reaffirmed that the universe relies on a moral foundation. He made a lucid decision to give his life to something eternal and absolute. He knew he was better off with faith than without. He partnered with God — God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
3. God welcomes Gideon’s inquiry. He does not give Gideon an explanation, but a response. “I am sending you.” It’s essential to recognize God’s call. We are part of the response to evil and suffering. This gives our lives cosmic significance. This is reminiscent of the story of Moses and many others (Sarah, Esther, Joseph, Nehemiah, etc.) when each of them were called and given a mission and purpose from God.
4. Our call is a unique expression that flows from our season, our gifts, and our responsibilities. As a college student at Morehouse, Dr. King heard a call, found his way, his focus, and personal clarity. Faith gives us the strength to be courageous to live out our call. Dr. King received death threats against him and his family during the boycott. The easy way out would have been to disengage from the struggle, to avoid trouble, to seek shelter in compromise and resignation, and Dr. King was tempted to do so. Instead, Dr. King dug deep to find inner strength and had a powerful experience of the presence of God with him in his darkest moment. This experience of God allowed him to stand up for justice and truth, and be ready to face anything. We, too, are able to come to God to seek His strength to allow us to fulfill our call.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What is the difference between calling and ambition? What are your personal hopes? How does that interact with your sense of calling from God? If you were to complete the sentence, “My calling from God is to _____” or “My purpose in life is to _____”, how would you respond right now? If you aren’t sure how to answer, how are you trying to figure it out?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Judges 6:11-14 \(NLT\)](#). What are the ways that Gideon encountered the evil and brokenness of this world? What are the things in our world today, or in your life, that feel overwhelming or insurmountable, and yet desperately need to be changed? Do you believe that you might have some role to play in creating radical, transformational, redemptive change? Why or why not? Do you believe that your faith might be a critical element in confronting and overturning evil in this world? What makes this hard to believe sometimes?
- 3) **DO** - Spend time asking God how He might be calling you to make a difference. Join us next Sunday!