

John 1:29-42

January 15, 2017

“We’ve Found the Messiah!”

“Two months before his assassination,

(pause) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (pause)

spoke to his congregation at Ebenezer

Baptist Church in Atlanta about his death

(pause) in what would (pause) oddly enough

(pause) become his eulogy.” (PAUSE)

““Every now and then I think about my own

death, and I think about my own funeral,’ Dr.

King told his congregation. ‘If any of you are

around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. (PAUSE) Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. (PAUSE) Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize, that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards, that's not important." (PAUSE)

“I'd like someone to mention that day (pause) that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried

**to give his life serving others. I'd like
someone to say that day (pause) that Martin
Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I
want you to be able to say that day (pause)
that I did try to feed the hungry. I want you to
be able to say that day (pause) that I did try, in
my life, to clothe those who were naked. I
want you to be able to say that I did try to visit
those in prison. I want you to say that I tried
to love and serve humanity.'** Dr. King
concluded with these words: 'I won't have

any money left behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind.

But I just want to leave a committed life behind.”” (PAUSE) (As told by King

Duncan, Collected Sermons,
www.Sermons.com)

Those thoughts and words of Dr. King echo the actions and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting those in prison are among the

examples of the behavior, which belong to the Son of Man when he comes as King according to the record of Jesus' Parable of the Final Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. **Those activities on behalf of others are manifestations of agape love – self-giving and suffering love. Jesus was the ultimate expression of God's Agape Love toward all people.** (PAUSE) So, those comments by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. about what he would like to be said about him during his

funeral (pause) indicated his recognition of the value and importance of following Jesus' example of living agape love in his daily life and ministry.

(PAUSE) What Dr. King told his church members about what he would like to be said of him during the celebration of his life at his funeral, indicated (pause) his commitment to God and Jesus. (PAUSE) **In a similar fashion, the Baptism of Jesus indicated**

(pause) **his commitment** (pause) **to fulfilling**
God's purpose (pause) **for sending him into**
the world. (PAUSE) This brings us (pause)
to our more closely examing the Baptism of
Jesus. Doing that (pause) provides us
important insight into Jesus' purpose and call
from the Divine Parent. (PAUSE)

Our Gospel Lectionary Reading from the
Gospel of John provided a unique and
powerful description (pause) of the differences

there are (pause) in it (pause) from the reports found in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (PAUSE) Most of us have some familiarity with the story of Jesus' Baptism, however, the texts of those other gospels (pause) reveal some confusion around the Baptism of Jesus on the part of the gospel authors and their sources. For example, why did Jesus go to John to be baptized? (PAUSE)

The issue was raised in Matthew 3:14-15 with John the Baptist challenging whether

he should baptize or be baptized and Jesus responding, “*Let it be so for now. For in this way we shall do all that God requires.*”

(PAUSE) Further, (pause) who saw the descent of the Holy Spirit come down on Jesus? (PAUSE) Who heard the heavenly voice following Jesus’ baptism? (PAUSE) Mark and Luke reported the baptism as supposedly from Jesus’ point of view – the vision of the descent of the Holy Spirit in

bodily form and then the voice speaking about him to him, such as in **Mark 1:11**, “*You are My Own Dear Son. I am pleased with you.*”

(PAUSE) But the Voice seemed to be

informing (pause) John the Baptist (pause) of Jesus’ relationship to God in **Matthew 3:17**,

“*This is My Own Dear Son, with whom I am pleased.*” (PAUSE) Which was the more

accurate – Mark and Luke’s version or

Matthew’s? (PAUSE)

Let's consider now our Gospel Lectionary Reading from the Gospel of John. We are informed in **John 1:29**, "*The next day* (pause) *John saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*" (PAUSE) John's message came across to many as having indicated Jesus was sent by God to be a sacrifice – like an animal sacrifice, (pause) which was required for the forgiveness of sins (pause) according to the Priestly Tradition and

the Legalists of Jewish society. (PAUSE)

Among the Jews, there was also the Prophetic Tradition, which focused on the relationship between the Divine Parent and the people. It seems John the Baptist was significantly influenced by the Priestly Tradition and the Legalists, while Jesus was much more aligned with the Prophetic Tradition. (PAUSE)

The following story is more in line with Jesus' and the Prophetic Tradition's emphasis (pause) on the renewal of the relationship between God and the People of God.

(PAUSE) “A young soldier was utterly humiliated by his senior officer. The officer had gone beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior in disciplining the young soldier and knew it, (pause) so he said nothing as the younger man said through clenched teeth, ‘I’ll make you regret this (pause) if it is the last

thing I ever do.’ (PAUSE) A few days later their company was under heavy fire and the officer was wounded and cut off from his troops. (PAUSE) Through the haze of the battlefield he saw a figure coming to his rescue. It was the young soldier. At the risk of his own life, the young soldier dragged the officer to safety. The officer said, apologetically, ‘Son, I owe you my life.’” (PAUSE) **“The young man laughed and said, ‘I told you that I would make you**

**regret humiliating me (pause) if it was the
last thing I ever did.’” (PAUSE) (As told by
King Duncan, Collected Sermons,
www.Sermons.com)**

The fact God sacrificed (pause) by way of the
suffering and death of God’s Son (pause)
demonstrated the Divine Parent’s Agape Love
and Forgiveness for all people! (PAUSE)

Our Creator was and continues to be
determined (pause) to persuade us (pause) to

live out the New Faith Relationship with our God, which the Almighty has given us as a gift – Grace. (PAUSE) **Instead of seeking revenge and wanting to harm us, our Divine Parent has boldly shown us Agape Love and Forgiveness through Jesus the Messiah – the Christ! (PAUSE)**

We know from the messengers of John the Baptist, while he was in prison, that he was surprised and disappointed that Jesus was not

following John's emphasis on God's punishment. (PAUSE) Unlike the understanding the Baptist had of his own purpose in the plans of the Lord God, (pause) the Baptizer's task was not to issue Jesus his call (pause) or to instruct him about how it was to be fulfilled. The role John the Baptist was to play in baptizing Jesus (pause) is much clearer in the report in our Gospel Lectionary Reading from the Gospel of John. (PAUSE) The Baptizer demonstrated his task (pause) in

relationship to Jesus (pause) when he went on to say to some of his disciples in **verses 30-31**,
“This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.’ (PAUSE) I did not know who he would be, but I came baptizing with water in order to make him known (pause) to the people of Israel.” (PAUSE) John recognized (pause) his main task with reference to Jesus (pause) was to make him known. (PAUSE)

Next, the Baptizer went on to explain (pause)

how he knew Jesus is the Messiah. (PAUSE)

In contrast to the reports of Jesus' Baptism in

the synoptic Gospels, our Reading from the

Gospel of John revealed it was John the

Baptist, who saw the descent of the Holy

Spirit onto Jesus and it was John to whom

God had spoken about the meaning of this

descent of the Holy Spirit on the man.

(PAUSE) It is reported in **verses 32-34**, "***And***

John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit

come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him. I still did not know that he was the one, but God, Who sent me to baptize with water, had said to me, 'You will see the Spirit come down and stay on a man; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (PAUSE)
I have seen it,' said John, 'and I tell you that he is the Son of God.'" (PAUSE)

On this Baptism of Jesus Sunday, it is important for us to remember (pause) Jesus

committed himself to fulfilling God's Purpose
(pause) as generally indicated in the Prophetic
Tradition – in accordance with the Divine
Parent's emphasis (pause) on reconciling our
Relationship with God (pause) through the
Almighty's Agape Love and Forgiveness
given as a gift – God's Grace, as revealed in
the Messiah – God's Son, Jesus Christ.

**(PAUSE) Instead of focusing on how we
can help ourselves by earning God's
Forgiveness and Love, (pause) we are to**

**respond to our Divine Parent's Agape Love
and Forgiveness (pause) shown in the
ultimate example in Jesus. (PAUSE)**

Instead of trying to spread a gospel of how
one can earn salvation, you and I are called to
rejoice in being invited and welcomed into the
New Faith Relationship with our Divine
Parent, which God provides us through the
Almighty's Agape Sacrificial Love and
Forgiveness, even though we do not deserve
it. (PAUSE) It is this Good News (pause) we

are to share with others – revealing God’s invitation to join us in following the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and living out agape love and forgiveness in the New Faith Relationship with God. (PAUSE) **Let our lives follow Jesus’ example (pause) of agape loving all people – showing (pause) we have found the Messiah! Amen.**