



Black History Month

By The Revd Philip Cochrane
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As I have mentioned before, during this season of COVID-19 I have 'seen' racism in a way in which I had not seen before. I know a number of you have experienced the same. It is one of the things that I do not want to unlearn or forget as we emerge from this time – it is one of the things I don't want to 'go back to normal'.

February also happens to be Black History Month and here in British Columbia, we have been reminded of inequalities in healthcare provision. So, just before we enter Lent, I wanted to return to something Martin Luther King introduced 'The Beloved Community' - a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and love of one's fellow human beings.

As explained by The King Center, the memorial institution founded by King's widow, Coretta Scott King to further the goals of Martin Luther King:

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

This aspiration drew from King's understanding of the holistic nature of the gospel and the kingdom of God. I hope it will inspire you afresh to see what you, your neighbours, your community groups and your church (St Paul's) can do to advance the beloved community.

The late Congressman John Lewis said this, "*Democracy is not a state it is an act and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the beloved community and nation and world society at peace with itself.*" This last part speaks to the Hebrew word Shalom – that concept of complete and holistic peace.

Of course scripture has in the past been used to justify racial segregation but today, we understand all humanity is made in the image of God and therefore worthy of that dignity and treatment as equals. So today, I leave you with a prayer from Martin Luther King:

"O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind; in whom to dwell is to find peace and security, toward whom to turn is to find life and life eternal, we humbly [come with our petition]: Increase the number of persons of good will and moral sensitivity. Give us renewed confidence in nonviolence and the way of love as taught by Christ.

O God, our Gracious Heavenly Father, help us to rise out of our attitude of self-centeredness, out of our egotism. Help us to rise to the point of having faith in [You] and realizing that we are dependent on

[You]. And when we realize this, O God, we will live life with a new meaning and with a new understanding and with a new integration...We are mindful, O God, that we cannot save ourselves... And so, we thank You for the inspiration of Jesus the Christ, who came to this world to show us the way.

O God, our gracious Heavenly Father...Help us to discover ourselves, to discover our neighbours, and to discover [You]...and to make all part of our life. Grant that as we continue to live, we will seek to develop all of those dimensions that will bring completeness to us. Grant somehow that we will learn to be concerned about ourselves, but at the same time give us that great concern for other selves. At the same time, help us to be concerned about [You] and to worship [You] in spirit and truth.

Grant that somehow we will come to the great conclusion that unless we have all three of these, we somehow live lives that are incomplete. Grant that we will go now with grim and bold determination to live the complete life...We ask [You] to grant all of these blessings in the name and spirit of Jesus. Amen.”