



**Day 9 | Friday, March 15, 2024**  
**Presenter: Malcolm Nelson**

Well, these passages left no room for comfort. As a matter of fact, they bring tension. When I began to read the scripture verse for today, it reminded me of why I was put on this earth. What my purpose is. Where my compass leads. What is so raw about these versus is that I have been on both sides of the tension. I will try my best to bring all the thoughts together, so stay with me as I bounce back and forth through two of the greatest leaders I have ever encountered, and how that impacts why I became an educator.

It wouldn't be me if I didn't bring you into my life, and into St. Therese. The other day, I came into the classroom and some students had fruit snacks. Not the end of the world by any means. However, it was first thing in the morning,

and my mother used to say no candy before noon. So, of course I inquired the reason for such early morning treats. I found out that the homeroom teacher had given them as an incentive for conducting themselves according to the expectations we set for the school. The teacher later heard my displeasure with rewarding them for doing something they are expected, and should already be doing. Now I am going to leave you with that cliff hanger and before I am done, I promise we will return to the 8th grade classroom.

Breaking open the word I found two parallels that seemed to jump out at me as not a coincidence. As I was reading the Gospel, I thought to myself, dang Jesus is not happy right now. His disciples said to him, Jesus you should go, as it is time for the feast of the tabernacles. Jesus sighted that “his time was not yet.” And almost reluctantly went anyway. I equate it to if you have ever had a time in your life when someone was speaking about something you disagreed with, but everything in you said, “nah just let it go, it doesn't even concern me. And you wait, and wait, and wait, until all the sudden you interject in a conversation with, “okay wait, hold up, this has gone far enough.

After not wanting to originally read, now here is Jesus going off on a crowd who claims to be followers of God, yet they live contrary to their actions. He said, Moses gave you the law and you did nothing with it. You can circumcise

on the sabbath, but I can't make a man whole on the sabbath? Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly.

And as I'm reading, my mind said huh? Judge justly? Just and unjust? Timely? Not my time? Mmmhmm, sneaky Jesus. I know where I've heard this before.

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely."

The parallels between Jesus 2,000 years ago, MLK 60 years, and our current world right now is sickeningly close.

The book of Wisdom tried to warn us of living in a world where we pillage, plunder, take what we can, give nothing back. We only live once, and our bodies turn to mist. Let us oppress the righteous poor; let us neither spare the widow nor revere the aged for hair grown white with time. But let our strength be our norm of righteousness; for weakness proves itself useless.

As I read this I couldn't help but think of Dr. King's letter from a Birmingham jail. Dr. King said when answering the clergy's questions on "untimely". The

hour came we lived up to our promise. Make no mistake King was intentional with his lyrics mimicking that of the Lord. Jesus told us to judge justly, and “My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me. Whoever chooses to do his will\* shall know whether my teaching is from God or whether I speak on my own. Dr. King spoke about laws that were just and unjust, and how you can tell the difference. A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.

Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly. Yet on February 26th 2012, Trayvonn Martin was killed by George Zimmerman based upon appearance.

Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly. Yet Emmitt Till was abducted, tortured, and lynched in Mississippi in 1955 at the age of 14, after being accused of offending a white woman, Carolyn Bryant, based on appearance.

Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly. Yet George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis by Derek Chauvin, based upon appearance.

Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly. Yet Manuel Ellis, a 33-year-old black man who was killed by police during an arrest on March 3, 2020, in Tacoma, Washington, based on appearance.

Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly. Yet January 6th, 2021, the outgoing president incited a riot on the U.S. Capital, and nothing happened. Based on his appearance.

Oooof.

And let me tell you, Dr. King said something so powerful. He said, In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. I think our country has plenty of facts collected. The Black Lives Matter movement helped spearhead self-purification and direct action.

But in reading scripture today, it was really self-purification that stood out to me. Dr. King said “As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case. Dr. King asked civil rights leaders

"Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?"

At that moment I remembered what the Psalm readings today told us; The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him from them all.

I don't know about ya' but I could talk about the letter from the birmingham jail for hours. But, I am short staffed today and the people need me. I'll close you with this. St. Therese sensed the injustice in the wake of George Floyd's Murder, and the students came up with the idea to lead a march from St. Therese down to St. James Cathedral. Call to action. In the wake of loneliness and despair the pandemic created on marginalized communities, the St. Therese students, tried to create a sustaining pride room. Self-purification. In an attempt to create a more just and equitable Seattle, the St. Therese students invited Mayor Bruce Harrell into our school for a community forum. Negotiation.

So why did I become an educator? So that I can teach my students about people like Dr. King, and the changemakers who spend their life fighting for equality for all people. Why did I choose Catholic School? Because the Book of Wisdom tells us they did not know the hidden counsels of God; neither did

they count on a recompense for holiness, nor discern the innocent souls' reward.

I told my 8th grade teacher I didn't love the idea of rewarding them for something they should be doing. She said, "but this will build positive reinforcement until they do it because it's the right thing to do", and then she said "and plus, isn't heaven our reward, isn't that why we do it?"