

This week Pastor Andy brings us the message entitled "Free At Last."

This week we celebrate the life of a man who championed the cause of civil rights for all Americans. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spent his life dedicated to fulfilling a dream that one day our country would be united as one people. As you reflect on his life, notice the parallels between Dr. King and another man of God. Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob, was also a man who had a dream. Each man's dream would bring him personal hardship but would later lift him to greatness. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers because of his dreams of his father and brothers bowing before him, while Dr. King was arrested and jailed 30 times for pursuing his dream of racial equality.

In the midst of unfair incarceration and persecution, both men remained true to their God-given purpose. They remained nonviolent and peaceful, no doubt because of their faith that God would be their deliverer. Joseph, having risen to power in Egypt, could have exacted harsh revenge on his brothers for their treachery. Dr. King could have easily resorted to violence when he and his followers were being attacked with bricks, firebombs, tear gas, and other weapons. By not trying to punish their persecutors themselves, they allowed God to intervene and change people's hearts.

Joseph and Dr. King each spent time in the presence of great men of power. For Joseph, he went from interpreting dreams for Pharaoh to being the second in command of the nation of Egypt. For Dr. King, it was time with presidents, governors, and other politicians. As Joseph was able to use his influence to save Egypt from a great famine, so Dr. King's influence helped avert the violence and bloodshed that may have otherwise occurred as the nation struggled to overcome generations of prejudice and inequality.

Both men valued reconciliation over retaliation. Joseph could have put all his brothers in prison for what they had done to him years earlier. Instead, he embraced his brothers and removed the shame and guilt that they carried for their sin. Dr. King no doubt must have considered the writings of the apostle Paul, who said, "If someone does wrong to you, forgive that person because the Lord first forgave you" (Col. 3:13).

Lastly, each man was fully prepared to meet God at death. Joseph lived a long life, having done all that God had asked of him, and was surrounded by his loved ones when he died. Martin Luther King, on the other hand, died violently, a martyr for the cause of peace and freedom. Though his life was cut short, it is clearly evident that his legacy of courage and faith has endured to this day.

This week, as our nation ushers in a new era with the first black president in our nation's history, think about what kind of impact just one life can have. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind when you leave this world? Will you give up when things get tough, or will you patiently and faithfully pursue the dream God has placed in your heart?