

Ed Hill - Reflection 1/19/2020  
Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

This is the weekend we celebrate the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was born January 15<sup>th</sup> 1929 and was assassinated April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968. For the next few days you are going to see picture of this great man with the dates "1/15/1926 – 4/4/1968" The official holiday we celebrate is called Martin Luther King's birthday, but that is not what we really celebrate. We may remember the first date, we may remember the last date, but we celebrate the "dash". How many of you know what I'm talking about when I say the dash?

The dash I'm talking about is the dash that we will all be remembered by, the dash that we will one day have that marks our time on this earth. What are you doing with your dash?

We all have our lives to lead, we have our own trials and triumphs, our failures and our successes, it's all part of the dash. Every day, we have a chance to redefine what our dash stands for. We celebrate the accomplishments of Dr. King because he redefined what his dash stood for. His birth name was actually Michael Luther King Jr., after his father. His father changed his own name to Martin in honor of Martin Luther, and the son followed. Martin graduated high school at 15 and enrolled at Morehouse College. During his first two years, he was an unmotivated, though popular, student. Martin questioned religion and was uncomfortable with emotional displays of religious worship. Martin had initially decided against entering the ministry, much to the disappointment of his father. Martin wanted to be a lawyer or a doctor. It was during his junior year that he took a bible class which renewed his faith and called him back to the ministry. He became the youngest

person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. In his short 39 years on this earth, Dr. King made a profound impact on society. What are you doing with your dash? What will your dash stand for?

Today's first reading started with "You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory". These words could come from any parent to their child. Being a servant means to do as the one you are serving wishes. When a child does well, it is a reflection on their parentage, when an athlete does well, it is a reflection on the coach. God calls each of us to be his servant so the glory of God can be shown through us. If you want to be great, wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be a servant; that is the new definition of greatness. And this morning the thing I like about it; by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great because everyone can serve. There is a poem by Marianne Williamson called "Our Deepest Fear" which is a favorite of mine. I have a copy of it above my desk and read it several times a day. A section of the poem says:

We were born to make manifest  
The glory of God that is within us.  
It's not just in some of us;  
It's in everyone.

The way to make manifest the glory of God in us is to be his servant, to do his will. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love, and you can be that servant". It's not easy and we won't always get it right. But we believe in the Spirit, the Spirit that recreates us every day. When something is recreated, it is new again. What was is no more! At the end of the day, if we are not satisfied with how things went, we are recreated every day. I'm not saying every day is a do-over, I'm saying

every day is a do-better! Complacency is not your friend! What are you doing with your dash? What will others say about your dash?

Martin's dash was 39 years, I'm sure he planned on having a longer one, but don't we all? The part of his dash that we remember and celebrate was less than 13 years long, less than 1/3 of his lifetime. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance, such as protests, grassroots organizing, and civil disobedience to achieve seemingly-impossible goals. He went on to lead similar campaigns against poverty and international conflict, always maintaining fidelity to his principles that men and women everywhere, regardless of color or creed, are equal members of the human family.

Yesterday, I had the honor and pleasure of going to a birthday party for a childhood friend's mother. Her dash is 100 years long and growing. Her dash contained 8 children, 25 grandchildren, 54 great grandchildren, 56 great-great grandchildren and 3 great-great-great grandchildren. I got a chance to see people I hadn't seen in decades. As I thought about my own dash, I was reminded how my life has impacted others. When someone comes to you and says "I remember when you used to say... that didn't make sense to me. Now I say it to my kids" you realize that your dash will be remembered.

I ask you to think about your dash. There will come a day when all you have done or didn't do; all you have said or didn't say will be summed up in that little dash between when you came here and when you left.

You have no idea how much longer your dash will be, years or minutes. All you have is your now, and you can't afford to waste it. A coach once

said “I will let you slack off on a play, if you know which play will not have an impact on the game, if you can’t tell me which play that is, you better go all out every play”. The same goes for your dash; if you know when you can not be your best, when you can not do the right and proper thing, when you can not be the help and support that another person needs because it won’t affect your dash, then go ahead and slack off. But if you don’t know...

“In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” What does your dash mean to those you come into contact with every dash? What does your dash stand for? What are you doing with your dash?