

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

This is the story of Martin Luther King Jr. We remember him during the time of the color green.

Martin was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. His mother and father called him Michael after his father, but when he was five his father changed his name and Martin's name to "Martin Luther King" to honor the great German Reformer from the sixteenth century. Martin Luther fought to make the world better, and they did too.

Martin had an older sister and a younger brother. His father gathered the family for dinner every night at 6:00 p.m. and led them in lively discussions about God and the world. "Daddy King" felt it was important to discuss serious things with his children, even when they were very young. They often talked about how all people should be treated with respect.

Martin's mother also talked with the children about important things. When Martin was six, his best friend, who was white, told him that his parents said they couldn't play together anymore. This confused Martin. He became sad and angry. His mother took him on her lap and told him about slavery and prejudice, which is when someone doesn't like you just because they don't like the color of your skin. She reminded him that there are places in the Bible where the people of God overcame slavery and prejudice. He could too.

When Martin grew up, he became a Baptist minister like his father and grandfather. He also began to work to change things so that African Americans would be treated the same as everyone else.

No one knew how real change might begin until one day in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. An African American woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus for a white person. This changed everything.

In those days, buses were divided into white, mixed, and black sections. She was sitting in the mixed section, but by law black people still had to move to the back of the bus when told to. The bus driver told her to move to make room for some white people. The other black people moved, but Rosa didn't. She wasn't tired, she said, only tired of giving in to unjust laws. She was arrested, and African Americans became angry when they heard about it.

Martin helped the black people of Montgomery fight back peacefully. They stopped taking the bus. This way no one was hurt by fighting, and the bus company lost money. Black people walked to work for 381 days, sometimes many miles.

Do you know what happened? The city changed the law that forced black people to sit in the back of the bus. They could sit anywhere they wanted to. This was the first of many peaceful protests Martin organized that changed America forever.

Working for change is never easy. It takes courage and faith. Many people were mean to Martin and his family. Someone tried to blow up their house. Many tried to scare them with their words, but also with knives and guns.

Many black people wanted to fight back, but Martin never gave in. He said, “Peaceful actions will bring peaceful solutions.” Even so he was arrested and placed in jail twenty-nine times for trying to change things by protesting against unjust laws.

In 1963 a huge crowd of people came to Washington, DC, to march for jobs and freedom. That’s when Martin made his most famous speech. He said, “I have dream” to call people to be thankful to God and to work to make the dream for freedom to come true for everyone.

Martin said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not to be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” This was also the year that he won the Nobel Peace Prize at age thirty-four. The next year, the Civil Rights Act made much of his dream into law.

But Martin kept on. He traveled the country working for change until one day in 1968 he was killed. He was in Memphis, Tennessee, working to organize another peaceful march. He was buried in Atlanta, where he was born.

We remember Martin because of his dream that African Americans will be treated the same as everyone else and because he courageously traveled everywhere to make this dream come true through peaceful protest.

I wonder

The Lord be with you!

This is the second Sunday after Epiphany and the color is green.

Godly Play has written some new stories, that we won't find in the Bible. These stories are about *People of Color Who Inspire*.

I am sharing the story about Martin Luther King Jr. with you this week, because Monday (January 18) is the day we celebrate the National Holiday of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday.

We remember Martin because of his dream that African Americans will be treated the same as everyone else and because he courageously traveled everywhere to make this dream come true through peaceful protest.

Have a good week. Be Safe.

I miss you!