

## **Martin Luther King**

Many years ago Martin Luther King preached at Bloomsbury Baptist Church in London. I went there recently to hear the Revd Stephen Keyworth speak about exploring the peace legacy of Martin Luther King.

Many believe that Martin Luther King gave a speech that delivered as much attention as his 'Dream' speech. It was the speech he gave in 1967 at the Riverside Drive Church in New York and Stephen Keyworth gave us a recording of that speech.

Before he gave this speech, Martin Luther King spent two months in prayerful retreat in Jamaica. His deep sense of peace and justice stemmed from his spiritual life. He condemned the war in Vietnam, and the US perpetuity of violence.

He told his audience that the war in Vietnam was destroying the soul of America. Soldiers were recruited from the poorest black and white communities. He believed prayer was a call to action and he could not remain silent. Truth that is silent is a betrayal.

He was moved by his conscience to speak out against the way. There had to be a radical revolution of values, in line with the core of Christ's teaching. In earlier sermons he emphasised our highest loyalty is to God, not to an institution or nation. If an earthly institution conflicts with God's will, it is our duty to oppose it.

His life and preaching caused terrible consequences, including imprisonment, a near fatal stabbing, his home was bombed twice and his family received constant death threats. Yet his spiritual strength shone through his deep sense of belonging to God and through his call.

The agonising moments had drawn him closer to God, hence he believed: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus'. His personal knowledge of God's power gave him courage and conviction.

He also sensed that his call would involve making the ultimate sacrifice and in 1968, a year after he gave his anti-war speech, he was assassinated.

Surely his legacy inspires us to dream and pray for a just and peaceful world. 'If any man would follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' Martin Luther King was clearly a prophet for our times.

**Martin Luther King**  
**1929-1968**

Civil Rights Leader  
Nobel Prize Winner (1964)

*Chief advocate of non-violent action  
against segregation of African Americans*