

Pathways To Faith

By Dr. Willie Holley

Dr. MLK Warned Us “Silence Is Betrayal”!

On April 4, 1967 at the Riverside Church in New York City, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed over five thousand clergy and church laity concerning the state of America and our role in the Vietnam War. At that time he spoke of the conflict he experienced within his heart as our country engaged in a seemingly senseless war and social unrest. As a Preacher of the gospel, Doctor King felt the failure of the clergy to address what many perceived as an unjust war and the mistreatment of our citizens here at home was a moral contradiction. During his speech, Dr. King expressed his sentiment that “A time comes when silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.” The “us” in Dr. King’s statement was addressed to the clergy and church laity. Doctor King was emphasizing the necessity for Pastors, Evangelist, Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Bishops, Deacons, Ministers and all others who claim the calling of God to take a stand against that war and the ills of society. To stand by and not speak out was deemed by Dr. King to be a betrayal of the role God called these people to fulfill in society. Today, we are in a war here in our own land and the clergy and church laity are often silent. The enemy is destroying our communities, schools, governmental institutions and even our churches as the clergy stands by appearing impotent and incapable of addressing these issues and confronting those that are charged to keep peace and order in society. We are witnessing all sorts of unusual and senseless acts of lawlessness and desperation. Innocent and unarmed individuals are routinely losing their lives to acts of violence. Parents are killing their children. Policemen are routinely involved in more and more shootings of black men for what appears to be minor incidents escalating into major confrontations resulting in death. We are seeing increasing instances of fraud and corruption among people in positions of trust, and society’s faith in our public institutions is waning. The economy continues to meander along offering little hope to those looking to invest and secure jobs that would allow them to live out the American dream. These are difficult times and should cause all of us to pause and reflect on where we are in the dispensation of time according to what the scriptures teach the children of God. Our elected and public officials are reacting poorly to groups like “Black Lives Matter”. These officials attempt to vilify these protestors because they are critical of their practices. We must remind our officials that they have a biblical and constitutional duty, as servants of God and mankind to care for the people, not attack them. (See Romans, Chapter 13:1-7) Church leaders must hear the words of Dr. King and begin to take a very public stand for peace, justice, and righteousness. As Dr. King challenged those present then to “...move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high ground of firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history.” My fellow ministers of the gospel and people of conviction everywhere, the time has come to break our silence and save our citizens, communities, institutions, government and our way of life. We must speak out against bigotry, hatred, violence, injustice and corruption everywhere. If we continue to remain silent, we betray the trust God has placed in us and we as a people are destined to perish. We must break our silence and not betray the people of God.

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