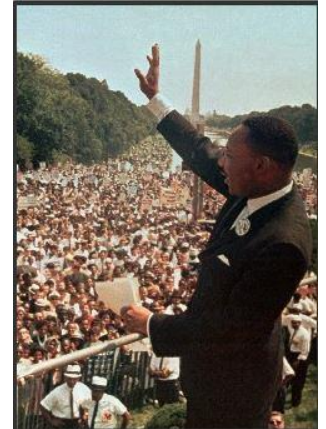


Remembering

Our nation remembers two recognizable Americans with mid-January birthdays.

Our nation celebrates the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Although his birthday is January 15, a national holiday in Dr. King's honor is celebrated on the third Monday of January. His 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 includes some of the most remembered and important words in American history. He was a Baptist minister who drew upon his faith to challenge Americans to uphold the Declaration of Independence's promise that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." At age 35, Dr. King was the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. His life was full of hardship and struggle, yet he rose above these to bring hope and solidarity that changed our country for the better. Dr. King is the only non-President to have a national holiday in his honor and is memorialized on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The last of 2,500 speeches was given the night before his assassination in Memphis, Tennessee. He said, "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now... I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. And I'm happy tonight." On April 4, 1968, the 39-year-old Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, yet the memory of his accomplishments will always be with us.



Actress Betty White did live a long life. Less than three weeks before her 100th birthday, her passing brought into focus many traditional American values. I have read Facebook posts that suggest people honor Betty White by doing acts of kindness on January 17th. Another post suggested we consider adopting rescue pets or support guide dogs for the blind on what would have been her 100th birthday. Betty White was known for her kindness, compassion, love for animals, joyful spirit, and love of life. She once said, "I'm the luckiest person in the world. My life is divided in absolute half: half animals, half show business."



Betty White was an animal activist, supporting numerous animal-related non-profits, and particularly the Los Angeles Zoo, where she volunteered. Over eight decades, she was a busy actress, earning a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Betty White was a TV "Golden Girl" with a real-life "heart of gold." Betty strove to make the most of every day. "You better realize how good life is while it's happening," she said. "Because before you know it, it will all be gone."

Few of us get a national stage to make an impact on the world. God gives us the opportunity to reach the promised land that Dr. King talked about in our backyard. We have the opportunity to commit to causes that further the kingdom. We can rally around causes led by others that align with Christian principles. We can start by leading in our families and in our community. We can be part of a movement at our church to help those in need – whether local or global. There are people right in your neighborhood or sitting next to you in the church pew who need comfort or friendship. Some people don't know Christ, so they will only be sitting in the pew next to you *if* you make it happen. You might be the only person in their life that can help them see the Promised Land. The list of possibilities of how you can make a difference is endless. Everyone is struggling in some way.

Help make the world a better place. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is not the only one with a dream. God has one too, and it includes you. *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).*

Question: What is God enabling you to do to help others and make a difference in the community?

The Bible Says: *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Hebrews 13:16).*

Prayer: Lord. We all have opportunities to serve You and make a difference in our world. We pray for courage and strength to seek to do your will. Amen.