

*Based on *1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Racial Justice Sunday*

**Incarnational translation below*

Before Parker Palmer became a prolific spiritual writer and renowned educator, he wanted to be like Martin Luther King, Jr. The prophetic activist for Civil Rights from a faith-based perspective inspired Palmer and many others of his generation to follow in King's footsteps as a drum major for justice.

The problem was, *the Source of various ways to serve* had not distributed that particular kind of energy to Parker Palmer. And he suffered for it. It took two bouts of suicidal depression in his forties for Palmer finally to accept reality. The common good could not profit when he tried to claim for himself the grace he admired in someone else. The common good could only profit from the particular kind of grace God had bestowed upon *him*.

Which begs the question for us on this Racial Justice Sunday, as we honor the legacy of Martin Luther King and recommit ourselves to the work of racial justice in our own time and place. What is *ours* to do? As individuals? As a congregation?

For this particular weekend 2022, King's surviving family members have issued a charge: *No celebration without legislation*. The same forces of injustice King himself died fighting are alive and well today, most specifically in the area of Voting Rights. *Do not even think about sleeping in on a Federal Holiday*, King's family insists, *until Voting Rights are restored on a national basis*.

The response to this charge has been dynamic. The West Virginia Faith Table, including me, your former Pastor, and many members of this congregation, took out a full page ad in the Charleston Gazette newspaper today naming the right to vote as *a civic sacrament*. The national organization *Faithful Democracy* has called for a day of prayer and fasting tomorrow in observance of the holiday. A colleague of mine in Tucson, Arizona, has joined faith leaders from across the country on a Hunger Strike for Voting Rights since January 6. They are hosting a Watch Night for Voting Rights livestream from the US Capitol tonight at 7pm, which will be posted on our SPC Facebook group page.

So what about you? What about me? What is *ours* to do?

There is a distribution of various kinds of energy, the Apostle Paul reminds us, *but it is the same Ultimate Energy that flows through us all ... an expression of the One Source, in service to the common good*.

The late great Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, Desmond Tutu, has said it was the prayers of the women that ultimately ended apartheid in his country. He, who hung out with Nelson Mandela and all of the other larger than life leaders of the anti-apartheid movement, said it was the prayers of the women that made all the difference.

So what about our prayers? What about you and me re-committing *to pray* for Voting Rights on this Racial Justice Sunday, on this Martin Luther King, Jr weekend? And not just with our hearts and our lips, but with our *phones!* As a *channel of disturbance* with those who have been elected to make decisions on our behalf. With the moral clarity of prophetic citizenship in our advocacy with two particular Senators who literally hold the power to do what is right in the eyes of our Creator. One of whom happens to be a sister Presbyterian.

If the Apostle Paul is right, and I think he is, one of us - and it only takes one - has been gifted with the capacity to communicate exactly the right word of wisdom needed for this time. One of us - and it only takes one - has been gifted with the capacity to translate a particular kind of knowledge about racial justice into language our elected officials can understand. One of us - and it only takes one - has been gifted with the strength of spirit to work what truly will feel like a miracle.

It could be you! It could be you! It could be you!

But we do not know which one of you it will be. So it takes all of us.

Everyone is given an expression of the One Source in order that the entire community may profit from all expressions of that Source, the Apostle Paul insists. Those of us who live in West Virginia have been given a particularly outsized influence in using that gift. As one of our Teach the Preacher participants declared in our gathering this week, Let's use it, for Christ's sake! (Literally.)

Let the church say, Amen!

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

*There is a distribution of various kinds of grace, but the same Source;
and there is a distribution of various ways to serve, given by the same Servant Leader;
and there is a distribution of various kinds of energy, but it is the same Ultimate Energy that flows through it all.*

*Everyone is given an expression of the One Source
in order that the entire community may profit from all expressions of that Source.*

*One person receives a word of wisdom from the Source,
another person receives a particular kind of knowledge from the same Source,
another person receives the capacity for deep trust in that Source,
another person receives the capacity to heal themselves and others through that Source,
another person receives strength of soul to work miracles,
another person receives a prophetic voice for justice,*

*another person receives the gift of discernment in challenging times,
another person receives the capacity to communicate
among vastly different kinds of people,
and another person receives the capacity to translate what other people are saying into language everyone can understand.*

All of these graces are energized and distributed by one and the same Source.

"Incarnational translation for preaching seeks to recontextualize biblical texts so that they say and do in new times and places something like what they said and did in ancient times and places" (Cosgrove and Edgerton, **In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching, 62).*