

Greetings from Sixth Street! Yesterday was Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and in preparation for it, I reread his "I Have a Dream" speech. He gave it during the March on Washington in front of the Lincoln Memorial in August of 1963. The March was designed to draw attention to the civil rights inequality between African Americans and Caucasians still present in the United States 100 years after Lincoln gave the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves. The March did exactly what it was intended to do; 250,000 people, white and black, drew together in protest to "cash the check" – in Luther's words – the Declaration of Independence wrote to all people. He said, "We refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation." Luther's Dream speech served as the capstone of the March; in it he called the supporters of the Civil Rights Movement to action. He called them to action but not to violence. He was adamant on that point, "In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred." This reminds me of Jesus' attitude, especially at the point of his unlawful arrest the night before his crucifixion. In the Gospel of John, Jesus' disciple Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant. "Jesus told Peter, 'Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?'" Jesus didn't use violence to fight against those trying to put a stop to his ministry and the Realm of God he brought to life in the world. Jesus drank from this cup knowing that God's will would ultimately be done. Just as Stephen was stoned for preaching the gospel, many have been imprisoned, beaten, and killed because of their nonviolent protests against injustice. In their way, they too are proclaiming the gospel which flies in the face of inequality and exclusion. The Apostle Paul wrote it beautifully in his letter to the Galatians: "You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." So I ask you, do you recognize injustice when you see it? Is there a way you can set aside bitterness and hatred and rise against it? May the gospel be your shield and your sword. Pierce the evil in this world, and make a way for God's grace for all people, all of God's children, until the Realm of God is everywhere for everyone.