

"To most Christians, the Bible is like a software license," Bill Maher once explained. "Nobody actually reads it. They just scroll down to the bottom and click, 'I agree.'"ⁱ

I am NOT a fan of Bill Maher for the most part, but I would have to say that to an extent I agree with that statement of his. If people cared about what God has to tell us in the Bible then why wouldn't Bible Studies throughout the nation be crowded with people.

I feel that the angry mob that we saw on January 6th was more interested in using the Bible as a weapon of destruction than to understand what God is saying to us within its pages. Other than overturning some tables, when did Jesus proclaim that violent, armed insurrection was a blessed thing? Seems to me, I recall, that Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." (Matt. 5:9)

Jesus said, "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." (Lk. 6:27-29)

That's what Love does. So, let's put all the anger that has been roiling our country aside for a moment. We have heard so much and seen so much since the events on January 6th in Washington DC. It's time to remember who we are, who God knows us to be, and what God is asking of us.

Psalms 139 is a great place to start. The writer takes an intimate look at his own relationship with God. We each have **our own** relationship with God. Some will say, as a famous bishop once did, "I know God better than I know myself." Really? I think God knows us better than we know ourselves! No matter where we are or what we are doing God is there. In this psalm the Holy One searches us out, presses upon us, traces our journeys and discerns our thoughts. All aspects of us are open to God who has seen us from the very point of our conception through all the days of our lives. **That's what Love does.**

What does it mean for God to know us? If we go into the doctor's office and she looks at her records about us she knows when we've been sick, and what treatments we've received over the years. You could say the doctor knows us...at least the medical part of us.

If we have a good friend that we spend time with, that person knows a lot about us too, but there are always things that we probably don't share with them. Our friends know us...but do they really understand us? Well, they understand parts of us.

But God's knowledge of us is too wonderful for us to fully comprehend. Can we even imagine the depths of what God knows? It is so high that we cannot attain to it. We are the proverbial open book to God. And that can be a disconcerting thing to contemplate. The good that we hold within our hearts, and the desires we have, and also the negativity that sometimes overtakes us; God knows it all, and does not turn away from us. Ever. **That's what love does.**

Tomorrow, we will we celebrate the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He had a special relationship with God who knew him and called him to speak some uncomfortable truths that some

people did not want to hear. Dr. King's prophetic voice woke us up to understanding that God's justice should be our justice, and that ALL people of our great country need to be treated equally as our Constitution promises. Because of the intimate relationship that Dr. King had with God he was able to put into words God's love for us and God's desire for equality for all people. Dr. King said, *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*ⁱⁱ

We still have a lot of work to do to make this country a place that honors all citizens as equally deserving of respect and rights. One has only to look at the news this last week; the Confederate flag displayed in the Capitol, anti-Semitic symbols displayed, and the charging of the former governor of Michigan with negligence in not providing safe drinking water to the people of Flint, Michigan. Everyone deserves to be able to drink clean, safe water in the United States of America.

God searched out Martin Luther King and **knew** him and set before him a sacred job to wake people up and to begin to right the wrongs in our country. **That's what Love does.**

God came to earth in Jesus Christ and today's Gospel reading speaks of how Jesus knew the disciples. In John's version of the calling of the disciples we heard that Jesus found Philip, Philip in turn goes and gets Nathanael, and Jesus, on seeing Nathanael says, "Here is truly and Israelite in whom there is no deceit." (or double standard.) Nathanael is shocked. "Where did you get to know me?" he asks Jesus. To be known is disconcerting. Nathanael wonders where Jesus got this knowledge. And that leads Nathanael to understand Jesus as the Son of God.

To be fully known by God is to be loved by God. And to be loved by God is to be supported, and encouraged, and heard, and comforted. And that makes us grateful because we are, each of us, wonderfully and marvelously made.

"You will see greater things than these." That is what Jesus promised to Nathanael and that is what he has promised to each of us. As God knows us, God will lead us in the way that we should go. **That's what Love does.**

ⁱ Quoted in *Newsweek*, "MLK Jr. was a Man of God. Why is the Secular Media Ignoring It?" by Lee Habeeb. 1/23/2019

ⁱⁱ Carved on the MLK, Jr. Memorial in Washington, DC. *Strength to Love*, 1963.