



*I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.* – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The above reference by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of a promised land was spoken during his historical speech on April 3, 1968, the day before he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King's mention of a new world revealed a prophetic dream of an existence, in my opinion, of a world in which laws would no longer be needed as placeholders for peace, but a reality in which the collective heart and awareness of humans would naturally create harmony. It was not ironic that King's life was cut short the next day. Our country's spiritual muscles were relatively undeveloped. The idea of equality for people who many thought inferior was a relatively new concept.

Fifty-two years later the current events in 2020 make King's vision of a promised land look like a fairy tale. We have experienced an unrelenting fury of twilight zone-like phenomena. The far reaching effects of the Covid-19 virus, the impeachment of President Trump by the House of Representatives, sparring between political parties that has seeped into the private lives of families and friends, the reemergence of hate groups all seemed to have a numbing effect on our senses – until the killing of George Floyd.

The eight minutes and forty-six seconds we watched George Floyd plead for mercy – a mercy that didn't come, and in the end, knowing his chances of survival were gone, we heard a grown man cry out for his mother – wrenched us out of any apathy we might have been experiencing. It was that video, front and center in our homes where, as Chris Suddeth mentioned in the last Wholly Holistic column, we were trapped by the coronavirus, that caused a tremor in the souls and hearts of many Americans.

Mr. Floyd did not die in vain. A collective awareness started rising immediately after his brutal death. Americans could no longer ignore the marginalization of a people that was too often ending in the murders of unarmed minorities. In the wake of Floyd's death people of all ages and colors took to the streets, social media and the media to protest. The rage of the hopeless played out in rioting. In the days and weeks that followed many Americans started dialoguing with each other openly and honestly about race issues.

America is on the edge of a cultural shift that is at once spiritual and practical. We will never be able to go back to how we lived life before. While spiritual growth is motivated from without, it is actualized from within. There is a source of unseen intelligence at play that is energizing the masses. It will be members of our generations – two in particular –that will be the major catalyst in that change. All of humanity will play a role in the shift, however there are two generations that I believe will be major role players – the Baby Boomers and the Millennials.

The Boomers are becoming enlightened *again*. Aged boomers who went from being young, peace-loving hippies to being sucked into the establishment vortex they fought against are once again rethinking the status quo. African American activists who became consumed with the responsibility of raising families have reenlisted in the movement.

Boomers are a unique generation. We witnessed legislative changes that addressed disparity and injustices. We walked out of a dark age in which bigotry was reinforced at dinner tables into light-filled rooms where open discrimination was no longer unacceptable. We were introduced to the idea that a human being's sexuality was to be accepted, after we grew up thinking it was against God's will for people to love who they loved. We were introduced to the concept that children, whether born within the confines of a marriage or outside of marriage, could not be illegal. We were the generation who *entertained* change.

Millennials are the generation King foresaw sitting side by side with one another accepting each other based on character and not on race. Indeed, they are the generation who have *known* each other since preschool. They are the generation who do not need to be convinced with words or laws that every race is inherently equal. These are the children who spent the night in each other's homes, cried with each other, laughed with each other and sometimes mourned with each other.

Millennials do not need to be convinced that discrimination is real. This is the generation who *are* the change the boomers escorted in. These new souls will usher us into the valley. These are the children who in fact have built homes and communities on the side of the hills that offer views of King's promised land.

Dr. King saw an enlightened humanity. We are getting a glimpse of the fruit of that new humanity. Right now we are experiencing labor pains. Before a woman gives birth her uterus contracts. There is nothing she can do to stop the contractions. There is nothing we can do to stop our labor pangs. We will all play a part in the delivery, but none of us can stop it.

The after effects of Mr. Floyd's death brought back Dr. King's promised land vision to me again. Do I believe in a Utopian-like society? I am not sure. What I know is, peace is natural and leads to creativity while violence is destructive, and leads to death and truncates progress. The world Dr. King envisioned will come to fruition not because of humanity's cooperation but in spite of it. Why? Nature is cyclic. We have lived under the domination of the threat of violence for the last two thousand years and are now moving towards, and living in, less violent times. Canadian psychologist and author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* speaks of the decline of violence in society as a whole. Eckhart Tolle, the German-born spiritual teacher and author of the best-selling book, *The Power of Now*, talks about how society's consciousness operates as a whole and is, and has always been, evolving.

We are a part of a movement towards civility and peace. It is unlikely that we will see the fruition of King's vision in our lifetimes. However, to be living in the path of a major culture change, and more importantly, being a part of it, is magical. George Floyd's eight minutes of pain was the breaking of the water. It was the beginning of the birth of a new land.

*Susan Madison is a motivating workshop facilitator, writer and visual artist. A native Chicagoan, Susan has lived on the coast of South Carolina for the past twenty years. She is currently working on her first non-fiction book entitled When We Rise.*