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A Walk Through the Holy Land,
Easter Sunday Sermon
Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

[29 March 1959]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

As King recounts his recent visit to the Middle East, he recalls falling to his knees and weeping during a visit to Calvary. He observes that Jesus's sacrifice on the cross was "something that nobody could demand him to do," making him "a man who had the amazing capacity to be obedient to unenforceable obligations." King tells his congregation that the cross is ultimately a symbol of hope: "We've been buried in numerous graves—the grave of economic insecurity, the grave of exploitation, the grave of oppression. We've watched justice trampled over and truth crucified. But I'm here to tell you this morning, Easter reminds us that it won't be like that all the way. It reminds us that God has a light that can shine amid all of the darkness." The following was transcribed from an audio recording.

It was on a beautiful afternoon a few weeks ago that we journeyed from our hotel in Beirut, Lebanon, to the airport to take a plane for Jerusalem. Lebanon is that beautiful country in the Middle East that we remember from biblical times, for occasionally we read about the cedars of Lebanon. And Beirut is that beautiful city that sits elevated on a hill overlooking the mighty Mediterranean Sea. Pretty soon we were in the air passing through places like Damascus. There again you remember Damascus, you remember it in modern days as the capital of the little country of Syria. But you remember Damascus as an ancient city, for it was on the Damascus road that the Apostle Paul was converted. You remember as he stood one day before King Agrippa, he said, "It was at noon day, oh King, that I saw a light, a light that outshines the radiance, the brilliance of the sun."¹ And after seeing that light and gaining a new vision, he was transformed from Saul the persecutor to Paul the Christian and became one of the great Christian saints of all generations.

After about two hours in the air we were notified to fasten our seat belts—we were beginning to descend, the descent for the airport in Jerusalem. Now, I must say that when you say "landing in Jerusalem" you must qualify what you are saying and tell what part of Jerusalem. That is because men have not solved their social problems, and we're still banned because in their Jerusalem, that ancient holy city has been divided and split up and partitioned. And before you can enter one side of the city, it must be clear that you will not enter the other because one side is Jerusalem, Israel, the other side is Jerusalem, Jordan. Because of the Arab-Israeli conflict this city has been divided. And if on your visa it is revealed that you are going into any Arab nation, you can only go to Israel without being able to ever go back to an Arab country in the life of your passport; the hate is

intensified. And so this was a strange feeling to go to the ancient city of God and see the tragedies of man's hate and his evil, which causes him to fight and live in conflict.

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But we were going to Jerusalem, Jordan. And it is in this section of Jerusalem that all of the ancient sites, on the whole, are preserved. Those sacred, holy sites. We landed there, in Jerusalem, Jordan, and in a few moments we had checked in our hotel, which was a YMCA hotel. Pretty soon we discovered, after checking in, that many other people were there from all over the world, many people from the United States, who were on tour through the world from various sections of the world. This is always one of the interesting things about traveling, that you learn to know people. You meet people of all races and of all cultures, and you tend to be lifted above provincialism, and chauvinism, and what the sociologists call ethnocentrism. You come to see a unity in mankind. If I had my way, I would recommend that all of the students who can afford it to go to college five years; they would study in that college four years, and they would use their tuition one year and their board and what have you to travel abroad. I think this is the greatest education that can ever come to an individual. I think if more of our white brothers in the South had traveled a little more, many of our problems would be solved today. So often we live in our little shells because we've never risen above the province. We've never risen above sectionalism. And so it was a great pleasure to meet people, various sections of the world, various sections of our own nation.

The next morning we rose early because we knew that this was the day that we would start our pilgrimage around this holy city and this was the day that we would tour Jerusalem itself. The next day we were to go to Hebron. There stands around the points where Abraham stood. There we would see the tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Sarah and others. And from there we moved to Bethlehem, that city, "oh little town of Bethlehem," we hear Phillips Brooks talking about it. We sing about it. We talk about "yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting light." We think about it as that city where "the hopes and fears of all the years met in thee tonight."² And that city where the wise men decided to leave because an event was taking place, and they went to see it and be a part of it.³ We were to stand there to see this spot and this place where our Christ was born. And to see the little inn, which is still preserved, where there was no room, no room for Christ, crowded out.⁴ When one looks at that, he cannot help but think of the fact that this is the long story of human history. We crowd him out by being preoccupied with other things. It doesn't mean that we are preoccupied with bad things either. So often the choice in life is not between the bad and the good; it's between the good and the better. And so often we fail to make way for the better because we are bogged down in the good. Those were not bad people in that inn that night. They were good people, I'm sure, and they had noble purposes for being there; and the

2. Episcopalian minister and abolitionist Phillips Brooks wrote the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" in 1868, recalling his visit to the Holy Land three years earlier. King paraphrases lines from the opening stanza of the hymn.

3. Cf. Matthew 2:9-12.

4. Cf. Luke 2:6-7.

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innkeeper was good, but they didn't have room for the better. This is so often the tragedy of life. And this came back as we stood there.

A day later we were to journey into Samaria. There, I think about the ancient days when the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. We looked up in Mount Gerizim, where the temple of the Samaritans used to exist, and we attended a service one afternoon. There are only two hundred and thirty Samaritans left in the whole world, and they live right around that little ancient shore there. And there we went and saw those people, and they had preserved there in their little temple an ancient document known as the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. And it is supposed to be the most ancient document in the world. And these five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—we had a privilege, the privilege to see that, written in its old Hebrew.

Then we were to go later to Jericho and to see that great city. And to think of the Jericho road that Jesus had talked about, that winding road. And when you travel on that road you can see why a man could easily be robbed on that road. Jesus told a parable about it one day.⁵ And then you see the walls of Jericho, which have recently been excavated. And you think about the walls of Jericho, and you think about Joshua, and you think about Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho.⁶ And then around Jericho you go to the Dead Sea and also the river of Jordan. And all of these things were in store for us.

And we stood in the holy city, but this day we would only go around the city of Jerusalem. Our guide came early that morning immediately after we had eaten breakfast. We'd started out and, interestingly enough, our first stop that morning was a mountain, a mountain that we've all heard about called the Mount of Olives. We've heard about that mountain in our Bible; we've read about. And every night, every first Sunday night when we have communion we read about it. Well, you remember it says that after the last supper they had sung a hymn, and they went out into the Mount of Olives.⁷ This was a significant mountain in the life of Christ. It has many interesting connotations. And you can stand there on the Mount of Olives and look over the whole of Jerusalem. Exalted that high, elevated that high, and you can look all around and see the old city and the new city. There we stood there on the Mount of Olives with all of its sacred meaning. Just below that mount at the bottom you see a little garden. It is known as the Garden of Gethsemane, and it's still preserved there with beautiful flowers; it's a beautiful garden.

But there is something about that garden that we must always remember. It is the garden where Christ agonized with his own soul.⁸ It is the garden where Christ uttered a statement which reveals that he was amazingly human. He didn't want to die, for we read that he said, "Father, if Thy be willing, let this cup pass from me."⁹ This is a painful, difficult cup. But then we see there the meaning of religion and all of its profound meaning, the transformation that comes about when

5. Cf. Luke 10:30-37.

6. Cf. Joshua 4:13-24.

7. Cf. Matthew 26:30-31.

8. King's 1957 Palm Sunday sermon focused on Jesus's experience in the garden (King, Garden of Gethsemane, Sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 14 April 1957).

9. Cf. Matthew 26:39.

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you love God and when you know him. We hear them in that same garden, saying a few minutes later, "not my will but Thy will be done."¹⁰ It was the same garden. And there is something else that you must remember about this garden. It was the garden where Jesus faced the most lonesome moments of his life. It was the garden where his three friends deceived him and were not concerned enough about him to stay awake while he was there praying. We read in the scripture that they went to sleep not concerned.¹¹ Isn't it tragic and dark in life when even those people that we have confidence in and that we believe in and we call our friends fail to understand us? And in the most difficult moments of life they leave us going the road alone. This is the story of life, though. So Gethsemane is not only a spot on the map. Gethsemane is an experience in the heart and the soul. Gethsemane is something that we go through every day. For whenever our friends deceive us, we face Gethsemane. Whenever we face great moral decisions in life and we find that we must stand there and people turn their backs on us and they think we are crazy, we are facing Gethsemane. Gethsemane is a story that comes to all of us in life. We looked at this garden, and all of these thoughts came back.

Just over from Gethsemane we saw a gate. And our guide said to us that this is the gate where Jesus entered Jerusalem. This is the gate where Jesus made the triumphant entry. We read about this. We read about the triumphant entry that day when Jesus came into Jerusalem. He came by way of the Mount of Olives, by the way, and entered that holy city, that city where so many things stood in terms of the long history of Judaism. That city that had stoned its prophets, that city that had crucified men because they stood up for right. This is the city that Jesus entered, and he entered through that gate. Why did he enter in this triumphant entry? We don't know. Some scholars said that this was the moment that Jesus decided to let the secret out; the messianic secret had been a secret for a long time, and now he would let men know that he was Messiah. Others would say that Jesus was not doing this himself but his followers were doing it. Those that he had let in on the, allowed to know the secret, would now let men know it, and so they were the ones who precipitated the triumphant entry. Others would say that this was the day of the Feast of Tabernacles. And it so often happened that on that day there were great parades and great crowds. And so it happened that Jesus entered on the day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the people decided that they wanted to honor this great prophet as he entered the city on the day of the Feast of Tabernacles.¹²

Maybe there is some truth in all three of these theories. But at least there is something more basic than all of this and that was that Jesus entered Jerusalem as a different kind of king. He didn't enter as David with great military power and great military might or as Saul with all of the military power [*word inaudible*]. Not even as Solomon with all of his wealth. But he entered on a lowly ass, which revealed that this was a new kind of king, not the same type of king that had come in the past but a king who had another type of kingdom. And so his escort would

10. Cf. Matthew 26:42.

11. Cf. Matthew 26:43-45.

12. Cf. Luke 19:28-38.

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be not spear but palm. And he would enter by the voices of little children, not by the shouts of soldiers. A new kind of kingdom and a new kind of king.

And he entered this gate, and we walked around and through there and pretty soon, about fifty feet from the gate, we came to a spot and the guide said, "This is where the old temple stood, the Temple of Jerusalem." You remember that temple fell in 70 A.D. The Roman Empire came to stop an uprising in Palestine, and they destroyed the temple. But the spot is still reserved, and there is a big stone in the middle of that point where all of the sacrifices used to take place on the altar. This was the temple where Jesus entered as soon as he got to Jerusalem a few hours and ran the money-changers out of the temple.¹³ This was where Jesus made his profound mistake. And what was his profound mistake? His profound mistake was that he went beyond the realm of talking about what he believed but he was willing to act about it. And he was willing to act on truth, and the world considers that a mistake.

We looked at this temple; then we started walking the ancient streets of Jerusalem. And you cannot walk those little narrow streets in that old city, as you move through the gate of Damascus and the gate of Corinth, without getting a real sense of history and the ancient qualities of that old city. We walked those narrow streets, and then finally that afternoon we came to another point. This was the point known as Pilate's judgment hall. In Jerusalem today all of the sacred points are enclosed, you see; they have churches around them now. Helena, the mother of Constantine, back in the fourth century went to Jerusalem. After finding all of these sacred points of the death and the life of Jesus and the Resurrection of Jesus, she had churches erected there. And so you will find a church erected around every sacred point in Jerusalem. And we stood there where the church stands now, that point known as Pilate's judgment hall. This was where Jesus was tried. This was where Jesus faced, on the outside, a crowd crying, "Crucify him."¹⁴ This is where Jesus had to stand before a man who knew that he had no faults but who, willing to content the people, decided to crucify him. And one cannot leave that point without weeping for Pilate, for here is a man who sacrificed truth on the altar of his self-interest. Here was a man who crucified justice on the cross of his egotism.

Then you leave that point, which is the judgment hall, and you start a new walk. It is known as the Via Dolorosa. This is the way of sorrow. And it is the way Jesus walked from the judgment hall on to the cross. You walk there—it's about a mile—from that point up to Golgotha, the place of the skull, or Calvary. This is the walk that is a noble walk. It is a walk that does something to the soul because you know that as you walk there you're walking the way of sorrow that Christ walked. And they have, as you walk along the way, spots. They call them stations—station one, station two—and there are fourteen stations between the judgment hall of Pilate and the place where Jesus was brought and crucified. And at every station, some significant event occurred, something happened. At one station Jesus stumbled; at another station Jesus fell; at another station he got up; at another station some-

13. Cf. Luke 19:45-48.

14. Cf. John 19:6-15.

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body came to help him along the way. And I will remember the experience that came when the guide said, "At this station Jesus stumbled and fell with that heavy cross on his shoulder." This was the tradition, you see, for when a person was crucified they made them carry the cross themselves. This was heavy, and Jesus had broken down under the load, and he'd fallen.

And I started thinking of something that I heard my friend Archibald Carey say some time ago.¹⁵ The thing that I thought about at that moment was the fact that when Jesus fell and stumbled under that cross it was a black man that picked it up for him and said, "I will help you," and took it on up to Calvary. And I think we know today there is a struggle, a desperate struggle, going on in this world. Two-thirds of the people of the world are colored people. They have been dominated politically, exploited economically, trampled over, and humiliated. There is a struggle on the part of these people today to gain freedom and human dignity. And I think one day God will remember that it was a black man that helped His son in the darkest and most desolate moment of his life. It was a black man who picked up that cross for him and who took that cross on up to Calvary. God will remember this. And in all of our struggles for peace and security, freedom and human dignity, one day God will remember that it was a black man who aided his only begotten son in the darkest hour of his life.¹⁶

You keep walking on that way, that way of sorrow, that way of trials and tribulations, and you finally come to that church known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And it's here, it is here within that church that you find the point where Jesus was crucified. It is here that you come to the cross of Jesus the Christ. Now certainly the cross that stands there today is not the same cross that Jesus was crucified on, but you forget that for the moment. You begin to feel the fact that you are around the spot where he was crucified. I never will forget the experience that came to me. And I stood before that cross and before the point, something within began to well up. There was a captivating quality there, there was something that overwhelmed me, and before I knew it I was on my knees praying at that point. And before I knew it I was weeping. This was a great world-shaking, transfiguring experience. And I remember we were with some other people and I, after that, went back to the hotel. And I left Coretta and the other people and said I was going in to the hotel, and I went on back alone. I walked back that same way and went back to the hotel alone and tried to meditate on the meaning of that cross and the meaning of the experience that I just had. And I started thinking in a way that I'd never thought before of the meaning of the cross.

And as I meditated on that cross, these things came to my mind. As I tried to calculate in my own mind and in my own limited way the meaning of this cross, these things came to my mind. That first, Jesus didn't have to go to this cross. He voluntarily did something that nobody could demand him to do. Nobody could ever demand that he sacrifice his life in a way like this. And he didn't have to do it. He could have recanted, and everything could have been all right. He could

15. Carey was pastor of Quinn Chapel AME Church in Chicago.

16. King refers to Simon of Cyrene, who was commanded by Pilate's soldiers to carry Jesus's cross (cf. Matthew 27:32).

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have gone back on the back side with the Mount of Olives and gone on back to Galilee, forgotten about the whole thing, and everything would have been all right. But here was a man who had the amazing capacity to be obedient to unenforceable obligations. I think this is what the cross says to us this morning. If there is any one thing that I would like for you to leave with this morning and that is that a man is not a man until he is obedient to the unenforceable.

There are three groups of people in the world. They are the lawless people on the one hand—people who break laws, people who are in our prisons, people who never follow the codes of society, whether they are written laws or customs. These are the lawless people. Then you have a second group—the law-abiding people whose standards of conduct come mainly from without. Their standards come from the man-made law, the law written on the book, or the customs and mores of society. So many people fit into this category. I would suspect that most of us here this morning would fit into this category. We are not lawless people; we are law-abiding. We follow what the law says, and we follow what the law without says; we are certainly true to the customs and mores of our community. There is a third group—those people who are committed to an inner law, those people who have an interior criteria of conduct. And this is the difference. These are the people who have an inner [word inaudible]. These are the people who are obedient to the unenforceable. These are the people who are obedient to something that the law without could never demand and could never write for you to do. These are the people who, in the words of, those beautiful words that Shakespeare said about Desdemona: “They hold it something of a vice in their goodness not to do more than is required.”¹⁷ These are the people who change history and who make history. They come occasionally.

It might be a Socrates who talks to his friend Crito who tells him that he can leave and everything can be all right and he need not face the tragedy of the hemlock. Socrates looks back and says to him, “I must stand on what I consider to be right and true, even if it brings death to me.”¹⁸ And now he said at the end of the *Apology*, “I go to life and, you—I go to death, and you go to life. Which of us goes to the better life, nobody knows but God. But I go because I believe finally in truth.”¹⁹

It might be a Martin Luther who stands before the officials of the Catholic Church. They tried to get him to recant and take back everything that he said about the corruption in the system of indulgences, about the Ninety-five Theses that he tacked on the door of Wittenberg. And he stands before them and said, “Here I stand. I can do none other, so help me God.”

It might be a Jesus of Nazareth who can leave and go back to Nazareth and become merely an insignificant character in history but who said to himself, “Oh no, I cannot follow this way. I must be true to what I know is truth and what I know is right. What I know will eventually be a part of the structure of the universe.” And this is what the cross says to us this morning: greatness in life comes when we are obedient to the unenforceable.

17. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, act 2, scene 3.

18. Plato, *Crito*.

19. Plato, *Apology*.

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A great nation is a nation that has citizens who are obedient not only to the laws written on the books but people who are obedient to those unenforceable laws. Great family, beautiful home life built not on the enforceable, on the unenforceable. Ultimately, there is a quality that can't be enforced. Whether a man is faithful to his wife or whether a wife is faithful to the husband is not enforceable. Ultimately, the individual must be obedient to the unenforceable. Whether a man will support his children and be true to them is unenforceable. The law can say you must support your children, but the law can't make you love your children. The law cannot make you give as much time to your children as you should. The law cannot keep you from going into endless activities and endless social functions while you neglect your children. The law can't make you stop doing that. Ultimately it is obedience to the unenforceable. And whenever a man rises to this point, he rises to the greatness of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This is what the cross says to me more than anything else—that we find a man who had the amazing capacity to be obedient to unenforceable obligation. And this is what he meant in his life, he lived it in his life. You remember he said, "Go the second mile. If they compel you to go the first, go the second."²⁰ Now what was Jesus saying? He said it again, "If men ask you to forgive them, don't stop seven times; forgive seventy times seven."²¹ Maybe they can require you to forgive seven times. But what he's saying is this—that the privilege of generosity begins when the requirement of the law ends. Jesus said this, and this is what he is doing on the cross. The cross is a climax of all that he had lived and expressed in his life. Going the second mile means merely being obedient to the unenforceable. This was the one thing that that cross said to me.

But it said something else to me which had great meaning as I thought about it. The cross is an eternal expression of the length to which God is willing to go to restore a broken community. Now this, I think is very vital. It tells us not only about the courage and the commitment, the moral commitment, of Jesus Christ, but it tells us about the love of God himself, the length to which God is willing to go to restore broken communities. Through our sins, through our evil and through our wickedness, we've broken up communities. We've torn up society. Families are divided; homes are divided; cultures are divided; nations are divided; generations are divided; civilizations are divided. Jesus experienced this in his day. He knew that, and God looked out, he looked back at Israel, and he knew that Israel had been a naughty child. She had gone whoring after other gods. She had brought about division in the very center of her being. And what is the cross but God's way of saying to a wayward child, "I still love you, and I am willing to go any length, including sacrificing the life of my only begotten son, in order to redeem you. And in order to come and to say to you that if you will see within that suffering Christ on the cross my power, you will be able to be transformed. And you will be redeemed." That cross is an expression of the eternal love of God our Father.

There is a final point. The cross is not only an expression of the love of God and the courage and moral commitment of Jesus Christ who is obedient to the

20. Cf. Matthew 5:41.

21. Cf. Matthew 18:21-22.

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unenforceable. But I started thinking of the fact; as we stood at that cross, there was a little walk, maybe about sixty or seventy-five feet. They said to us that this is the tomb where Jesus was buried. Strangely enough, it was a borrowed tomb.²² Borrowed tomb—he didn't have anything; he didn't have any money. He didn't have anywhere to lay his head.²³ Even when he died on a cross, one of the most ignominious deaths that we can ever point to in history, he had to be buried in a borrowed grave. We stood in there. But that guide began to talk, and he became eloquent when he talked about it. He said, "But I want you to know that this tomb is empty. He is not there now. This is just a symbol of where he was, but he isn't there now." And oh, that cross to me is a demonstration of something. It is triumph, isn't it? It is not only tragedy, but it is triumph. It is a revelation of the power of God to ultimately win out over all of the forces of evil.

Whatever you believe about the Resurrection this morning isn't important. The form that you believe in, that isn't the important thing. The fact that the revelation, Resurrection is something that nobody can refute, that is the important thing. Some people felt, the disciples felt, that it was a physical resurrection, that the physical body got up. Then Paul came on the scene, who had been trained in Greek philosophy, who knew a little about Greek philosophy and had read a little, probably, of Plato and others who believed in the immortality of the soul, and he tried to synthesize the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul with the Jewish-Hebrew doctrine of resurrection. And he talked, as you remember and you read it, about a spiritual body. A spiritual body. Whatever form, that isn't important right now. The important thing is that that Resurrection did occur. Important thing is that that grave was empty. Important thing is the fact that Jesus had given himself to certain eternal truths and eternal principles that nobody could crucify and escape. So all of the nails in the world could never pierce this truth. All of the crosses of the world could never block this love. All of the graves in the world could never bury this goodness. Jesus had given himself to certain universal principles. And so today the Jesus and the God that we worship are inescapable.

We can talk this morning about the inescapable Christ. We can get by and for all of the world he lives today. He lives today in society; he lives today in our lives; he lives today in the world. And this is our hope. This is what keeps us going. There is something in the cross that is not only an element of tragedy; there is an element of triumph within that cross. So you can go out this morning with new hope, new hope for the future. No matter how dark it gets, realize that God ultimately transforms Good Friday into Easter.

Some years ago, somebody asked William Howard Taft, "What about the League of Nations?" He said most good things in this world get crucified, eventually placed in a tomb.²⁴ There's always the third day. Isn't that true? That League of Nations that was one day crucified, today, [*gap in tape*] has been resurrected in the United Nations. Woodrow Wilson probably died unhappy and frustrated,

22. Cf. Matthew 27:59–60.

23. Cf. Matthew 8:20.

24. Taft was the twenty-seventh president of the United States (1909–1913). In 1921, Taft was appointed chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

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'cause men didn't have the vision to see it.²⁵ They didn't have the vision to follow it. But today there's the United Nations, which is nothing but the old League of Nations on a broader scale. And before there can ever be peace in this world, we must turn to an instrument like the United Nations and disarm the whole world and develop a world police power so that no nation will possess atomic and hydrogen bombs for destruction. This is our hope, isn't it? It was buried one day, but now it has been resurrected. Years ago, back in 1896, doctrine was crucified, the doctrine of righteousness, the doctrine of treating men as equals. The doctrine of integration, it was crucified. There was a man by the name of Justice [Louis] Harlan who was crucified along with it, I guess. He was condemned because he gave a dissenting vote when they set forth the *Plessy versus Ferguson* decision.²⁶ But thank God there came May seventeenth, 1954, and it was resurrected.²⁷ Given in a unanimous decision by the Supreme Court of the United States, here was a minority opinion in 1896 which became a majority opinion in 1954. What is this saying? The cross reveals to us that ultimately the impractical idealists of yesterday become the practical realists of today. The cross reveals to us that what was a minority opinion yesterday becomes a majority opinion tomorrow, and the world forgets that it ever trampled over it because it rises up with new truth and new meaning and new beauty. This is what the cross tells us. It brings hope to us.

And so this morning, let us not be disillusioned. Let us not lose faith. So often we've been crucified. We've been buried in numerous graves—the grave of economic insecurity, the grave of exploitation, the grave of oppression. We've watched justice trampled over and truth crucified. But I'm here to tell you this morning, Easter reminds us that it won't be like that all the way. It reminds us that God has a light that can shine amid all of the darkness. And he can bring all of the light of day out of the darkness of the midnight.

I close with this little experience some weeks ago, about four Sundays ago. Mrs. King and I journeyed down to a city in India called Trivandrum. It is a city in the last state, the southernmost point of the country of India. And then we went from Trivandrum on down to a point known as Cape Comorin. This is the point where the land of India ends and the vast and rolling waters of the ocean have their beginning. It is one of the most beautiful points in all the world. The point where three great bodies of water meet together in all of their majestic splendor: the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean.

I remember that afternoon how we went out there and we took a seat on a rock that slightly protruded itself out into the waters, out into the ocean. We looked at the waves of these great bodies of water as they unfolded in almost rhythmic procession. Then we looked at the beautiful skies, all of their radiant beauty. Then we looked over at the sun, as it stood like a great cosmic ball of fire, it started setting. And you know at the setting of the sun you see that glowing fusion of colors

25. In 1920, President Wilson failed in his efforts to gain Senate approval for U.S. membership in the League of Nations. He died four years later. The United States joined the United Nations in 1945.

26. The Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* (163 U.S. 537) decision upheld a Louisiana law mandating separate but equal accommodations for blacks and whites on intrastate railroads.

27. In 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously reversed the doctrine of "separate but equal" and declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*).

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so characteristic of the setting of the sun. We watched it. It went down. We were sitting there on that rock as the waves were beating upon it, looking at the sun. And that sun started going down and down, and it looked like it was sinking in the very ocean itself. Finally, it had passed away so that we couldn't see any more of the sun. It started getting a little dark and hazy about. Then, right at that moment, I turned around, and I said to Coretta, "But look, there is another light." It was the light of the moon over there in the East. And this was an interesting thing; this is, as I said, one of the most beautiful points in all the world. And this happened to be one of those days when the moon was full. And this is one of the few points in all the world that you can see the setting of the sun and the emergence of the moon simultaneously. And I looked at that, and something came to my mind that I had to share it, Coretta and Dr. Reddick and the other people who were accompanying us around at that point. I said to myself there is something in this that is an analogy to life.

So often we come to those points when it gets dark. It seems that the light of life is out. The sunlight of day moves out of our being and out the rest of our faith. We get disillusioned and confused and give up in despair. But if we will only look around we will discover that God has another light. And when we discover that, we need never walk in darkness. I've seen this so often in my own personal experience. For when it was dark and tragedy around, seemed that the light of day had gone out, darkness all around and sunlight passing away, I got enough strength in my being to turn around and only to discover that God had another light. This would be a tragic universe if God had only one light. But I came to see in a way that I'd never seen it before, that God has another light, a light that can guide you through the darkness of any midnight. Are you disillusioned this morning? Are you confused about life? Have you been disappointed? Have your highest dreams and hopes been buried? You about to give up in despair? I say to you, "Don't give up, because God has another light, and it is the light that can shine amid the darkness of a thousand midnights." This is what the cross tells us. It reminds us that when men put the sunlight out, that God has the light of the moon. And no matter how dark it gets, God is still around with all of his power. They put the light out on Good Friday, but God brought it back on on Easter morning. They've put the light out so many times in history. I've seen empires and kings and rulers put it out. But God has another light. Go into the valleys, through the hedges, and into the highways and tell men that God has another light. You can turn the light off, but he has another light to turn on. And then you will discover that He even turns that light on that went out again.

For I started thinking finally that that light which went down in India, went up in Montgomery, Alabama. The minute that the light was going out in India, the light of the sun is getting up in Montgomery because there is twelve hours difference in the time. And even that same light that will get up in Montgomery and go down, will be getting up in India again. You don't block God's lights. He manipulates and controls them. And we never need walk in darkness because God has a light for the night and a light for the day, and he controls both. This is our hope. This is what the Resurrection tells us. This is what Easter tells us. And this is what I found as I walked around that holy land and stood around that cross.

Be obedient, not only to the external written law but to that law written in your heart, obedient to the unenforceable. Not only that, be grateful to God for his

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love. And even then you can't repay it. Because when you survey that wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, there is something that reminds you that your greatest gain you must count as loss and pour contempt on all your pride. And then even after that you find yourself saying, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my all, and my all."²⁸ But not only that. Know that God has the universe in His hands. And because of that, segregation will die one day. Because of that, all of the lands of Africa will be free one day. Several years ago, forty years ago, only two of them were free—that was Liberia and Ethiopia. Today eight of them have been added, and in 1960 some more will be added—Nigeria, Togoland, the Cameroons, and Somalia.²⁹ And then I predict that fifteen years from now, all of them will be free, and there will not be a colonial power existing anywhere in this world. Why is all of that? It is because God holds the reins of the universe in His hands, and when the light goes out at one hour, it comes on at another with the power of His being. And this is the hope that can keep us going and keep us from getting frustrated as we walk along the way of life. Let us pray. O God our gracious
[*recording interrupted*]

At. MLKJP-GAMK: T-17.

28. King paraphrases the first and last stanzas of Isaac Watts's hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (1707).

29. In addition to the four King mentions, thirteen other African nations gained their independence in 1960: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.