sanctioned it. *(That's it, that's it)* Segregation would be dead as a doornail in the South today if the Southern white church took a stand against it *(Sure enough, sure enough)* So today I say to you that my ultimate faith is not in organized religion, but I have a faith. *(Yes)* "What is that faith?" *(Sure enough)* I say to you this morning that my faith is in the eternal God *(All right)*, whose purpose changes not *(Sure enough, sure enough)* So I can cry out:

Oh God, our help in ages past *(Talk, Yes)*,
our hope for years to come *(Sure enough, sure enough)*,
our shelter in the time of storm,
and our eternal home *(Sure enough, sure enough)*

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting Thou art God,
to endless years the same

This is my faith And I choose to go on through my days with this faith I tell you if you catch it, you will be able to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope *(Yes)* Love yourself, you are commanded to do that *(Well)* That is the length of life *(Well)* Love your neighbor as you love yourself *(Oh yeah)*, you are commanded to do that That's the breadth of life *(Well, Oh yes)* But never forget that there is a first and even greater commandment Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart *(Oh yes)*, with all thy soul *(Yes)*, and with all thy mind *(Yes)* That is the height of life And when you do this, you'll live the complete life Thank God for John who, centuries ago, out on a lonely obscure island, caught vision of the new Jerusalem And God grant to those of us who are left to live life, who have kept the vision *(Oh yes)* and decide to move toward that city of complete life in which the length, and the breadth *(Oh yes)*, and the height are equal *(Oh yes, Yes, Amen, My Lord)*

At JBC

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15 Isaac Watts, "O God Our Help in Ages Past" *(1719)*

"Love in Action" I

[3 April 1960]
[Atlanta, Ga.]

Throughout his pastoral career, King developed several sermons on love, including this handwritten outline exploring forgiveness and living in accordance with God's teaching

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1 King later developed this sermon further and included it in a thematic series (King, "Levels of Love," Sermon Delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, 16 September 1962, pp 437-445 in this volume)
"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." 2

Introduction Notice closely the word with which our text opens. "Then " The verse which immediately precedes it reads thus, "And when they were come to the place, which is called Glavery, there they crucified Him; and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. " Then, said Jesus, Father, forgive them. "Then"—when he was the victim of man’s most dying ignominous death "Then"—when he was being plunged into the abyss of nagging agony "Then"—when man had stooped to his worst "Then"—when the wretched hands of the creature had dared to crucify the only begotten son of the creator "Then"—when the wileness of the human heart was displayed in climactic devilry Then, said Jesus, Father Forgive them Behind that then could have been another reaction Then he could have said, "Father, get even with them. Then he could have said, "Father let loose the mighty thunderbolts of righteous wrath and slay them Then he could have said, "Father open the flood gates of justice, and let the staggering avalanche of retribution pour upon them " But this is not his response. Though subjected to unspeakable shame, though suffering excruciating pain, though despised, rejected, hated, nevertheless, He cries, "Father, forgive them."

Let us notice two basic lessons from this text

1. It is an expression of Jesus’ ability to live in the closest detail the sublime philosophy which his lip had proclaimed Match his sublime teachings with matchless living 4
   (a) One of the tragedies of life is that very few men match their profession with practice 5
   (b) He had spoken about love (Love your enemies) and forgiveness 6
   (c) Then comes the moment of testing Will he reveal the love and forgiveness that he has talked about. He responds by proving that his deeds are equal to his words 7

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He would also submit a version of this sermon for publication (King, Draft of Chapter IV, Strength to Love, "Love in Action," July 1962–March 1963, pp 486–494 in this volume). According to a 3 April 1960 program from Ebenezer, King preached the sermon "Love in Action."

2. Luke 23:34
4. In a later version of this sermon that King kept in his sermon file, he continued “This was Jesus finest hour, this was his heavenly response to his earthly rendezvous with destiny We sense the greatness of this prayer by contrast Nature does not forgive It is caught in the finality of its impersonal structure In spite of the agonizing pleas of men trapped in the path of an onrushing hurricane or the anguishing cry of a builder falling from the scaffold, nature expresses only a cold, serene and passionless indifference” (King, Love and Forgiveness, Sermon notes, 20 May 1964)
5. In another outline of this sermon, King wrote, “How often are our lives characterized by a high blood pressure of Creeds and an anemia of deeds” (King, Love in Action II, 3 April 1960)
6. Matthew 5:44
7. In the other outline, King continued, “Jesus affirmed a higher law from the cross He knew that an eye for an eye would leave everybody blind He did not seek to overcome evil with evil He overcame evil with good What a magnificent lesson Generations will rise and fall Men will continue to worship the god of revenge and bow before the altar of retaliation, but ever and again this noble lesson of Calvary will be a nagging reminder that only goodness can drive out evil” (King, Love in Action II, 3 April 1960)
II It is an expression of Jesus awareness of man's stupidity They know not what they do
(a) over some of the most shameful tragedies of history [*hang*] these words.  
(b) Individually, I feel like saying Father be merciful to me a fool

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 120, “Love in Action” / “Father Forgive ”

8 Fosdick, “Crucified by Stupidity,” in *The Hope of the World*, p 223 “over the most shameful tragedies of history, as over the cross of Christ, the judgment stands ‘They know not what they do ’”

9 Cf Luke 18:13 In his sermon notes, King concluded at this point, “A second lesson comes to us from Jesus prayer on the cross It is an expression of man’s intellectual and spiritual blindness ‘They know ’ Blindness was their trouble, enlightenment was their need Jesus was nailed to the cross not simply by badness but also by blindness The men who [*crucifed*] ‘crucify him’ were not bad men but rather blind men This tragic blindness expresses itself in many ominous ways in our own day I Some men feel that war is the answer to the problems of the world Sincerity & conscientiousness in themselves are not enough Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity The church must urge men to be kindhearted & sincere” (King, Love and Forgiveness, 20 May 1964)

**“The Seeking God”**

*[2 October 1960]*
*[Atlanta, Ga]*

*Referring to Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep, King declares God’s active concern and love for every individual “Every man from a [bass] black to a treble white is significant on God’s keyboard “*

Based on the parable of the Lost Sheep


Introduction—There is a desperate question on the lips of every individual It is a poignant insistent question In no life can the question be finally dismissed The question is simply this—What is God like? “The Power that rolls the planets on their course and draws the line of death across our human days—Who is He?” “Our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt”—What is he like  The majestic Power that is the heartbeat of the cosmos—Who is he This is the desperate, stinging, poignant question flowing from the lips of every man

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1 This sermon was King’s announced topic for this date (Ebenezer Baptist Church, Press release, “The Seeking God” King Jr’s Topic at Ebenezer,” 1 October 1960)

2 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 179 “What is God like” the Power Who rolls the planets on their course and draws the line of death across our human days—Who is He? ‘Our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt’—what is He like?”