

Washington, D.C. - It is an honor to be with you today, and it is encouraging to see the number and variety of King events being held across the Triangle.

I value the opportunity this holiday gives us to reflect upon Dr. King's work.

Among the many profound things he said was that "the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

What do you suppose he would say about today's challenging and controversial times? As Bishop Curry said this morning [at the Triangle Interfaith Prayer Breakfast], we are in a "season of struggle."

There is continuing violence in the Middle East. There is devastation in South Asia. At home, we have only recently emerged from one of the bitterest campaigns in history.

There is much talk about the poisoned political atmosphere in Washington that is filtering down to our communities, coloring them "red" or "blue."

But there is much to fight about – we hear cuts are on the way that go to the very basics of life...decent housing, available and affordable health care, educational opportunity.

There is also much talk about faith ...but not nearly enough action in applying that faith to our communities' challenges.

Dr. King lived what he preached. "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?" he said.

It is a question we should ask ourselves.

What are we doing for the millions in our country and abroad who are living in poverty? The millions without health care? The millions who don't have access to good schools? The millions who need work?

What are we doing for the men, women, and children who have suffered devastating losses in Asia? What are we doing for the men and women whose loved ones are on the front lines of battle? Whose husbands, wives, sons and daughters return with life-altering injuries...or never return at all?

As citizens, we must not give up or give in; we must continue to fight hard for leadership and policies that will open up opportunity, do justice, and make peace. As individuals, congregations, and local communities, we have responsibilities too, to reach out wherever we are – indeed, to create our own opportunities – to make a difference.

Dr. King would quote Mark 9:35, the scripture in which Jesus tells James and John "...whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever among you will be the first shall be the servant of all."

On this Martin Luther King Day, may we incorporate those words into our daily lives, and strive for that combination of determination, courage, and humility that Dr. King exemplified.

Even in a time of struggle, we can find common ground. May we continue to strive for "liberty and justice for all," standing by those who needs us most, and standing up for the values of which this day reminds us.