



Service Before and Beyond Worship

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often even vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A Letter from a Birmingham Jail

David Lowes Watson, a contemporary Wesleyan scholar and professor at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, suggests that “acts of compassion” and “acts of justice” may be a more contemporary translation of the “works of mercy” in their personal and social forms, and “works of piety” can be translated into “public acts of worship” and “private acts of devotion.”

The inspiration for the **National Black Church Taskforce Initiative on Crime and Criminal Justice** comes from the inspiration of Charles Wesley who was probably inspired by Matthew Henry’s classic commentary on the Leviticus passage:



We have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve; and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it, and it is our peril if we neglect it. Keep it ‘that ye die not’; it is death eternal death, to betray the truth we are charged with.

But what we know it as is the hymn that comes out as the mandate for mission, a sending forth into the world as those who have worshiped and been charged “to serve the present age.”

Justice Sunday 2005

the first observance of the

2005 National Day of Recruitment Honor

Dr. King

by serving this present age

Become a mentor of a youth or adult

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