

Small Talk – May 26 2021
By Michael Small

In the midst of personal and or national crisis, too many simply or only say, “I will pray for you.” When there is yet again one more mass shooting we hear over and over again “Our prayers are with the families who have lost loved ones, children, spouses, or parents”. When someone is in the grips of a mental health crisis they might hear “I will keep you in my prayers”.

Prayers do intentionally connect us to others. Prayerful discipline, daily prayer keeps us mindful of those around us, especially those to whom we are praying for. I do not doubt that all of the prayers lifted up, in mysterious ways, they can be helpful. There are those who believe to simply meditate, pray daily infuses the surrounding areas with positive life-altering energy and possibility. There are some who say that praying over water “can change the structure of water, water can receive and reflect the harmony around”¹. But prayer does one more very critical thing, perhaps the most important aspect of prayer – prayer makes the heart more pliable and opens up the soul of the one who is praying. Prayer makes an attitude adjustment, and I think it gives to us clarity, wisdom, and strength. It is a way of being intentional about the future. It is being mind-full.

We know at the core of Jesus’ ministry was prayer. But his ministry did not begin and end only with prayer. His ministry was hands on. It was a ministry that had him confronting the “powers and principalities” of his time. He took on systemic injustices of first century Palestine. He confronted religious and political persons and systems who oppressed the marginalized, the poor, the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and foreigner. And he healed the blind, the lame, the sick, and those who were possessed (mental illness).

In our day, it is not enough to simply pray for the end of gun violence, for an end to systemic racism, for an end to the extreme inequity between the rich and the poor. It is not enough to pray for the end of Covid-19 or to pray that our earth and climate will be made whole again. Though prayer my ground us and give us strength, all of us must do the work and become a part of the solution.

What matters is how we interact and are engaged with those around us and the world. Part of why one does church (or any other human system) is to choose a system or organization that nurtures, upholds, and enacts the best of human values and beliefs. It is a way of shaping and organizing human communities.

One such system declares – *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--*

¹ <https://mass-meditation.com/blog/consciousness-can-change-the-structure-of-water-can-receive-and-reflect-the-harmony-around>

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men [and Women], deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

May we continue to work for, build up, and alter our way of governing and of government that all may know “safety and happiness”. May we be and enable all of our systems to be life giving. That means we will do the work of speaking truth to the powerful, lifting up those on the margins, and being compassionate and loving toward all we encounter. Together we can do the work.

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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