

**Small Talk – August 16 and 18 2021**  
**By Michael Small**

It has taken me a couple of days to write the words below. (I suspect there are too many words but needed) As I reflect on the events of the past week, I struggle with what to say. I don't know how to respond or be present with all that is happening. The question one needs to ask and respond to is how does one shed the light of gospel, or good news on the world today? How do we bring the transformative power of the ways of Jesus to those places of war, anger, fear, hatred, and despair? It always begins with you and me, in our homes and in our communities!

This I know to be true – the past few days have been difficult. Children and adults in America are (unnecessarily) contracting Covid-19, and tragically, some of them are dying. After being diagnosed with Covid-19 a healthy 13-year-old girl in Mississippi dies. Schools debate mask wearing, virtual learning, and those who are not vaccinated continue to be resistant. The Delta Virus surges!

Then there is the rapid fall of the government in Afghanistan to the Taliban, though predictable, this is tragic beyond imagination. What I find difficult to understand and accept is – when deep and good faith traditions are blended with or taken over by narrow, vindictive, and judgmental political beliefs – changing systems of profound faith informed by love, forgiveness, respect, and reconciliation into judgmental systems that elicit rigid control, fear, hate, exclusion, and sometimes death. This includes both the Muslim, Christian, and other faith systems. Jesus says, *“Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep, but underneath are ravenous wolves. **You will be able to tell them by their fruit.** Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?”*<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the nation Haiti is dealing with the aftershocks, death, and destruction of a devastating earthquake and at the same time being inundated by hurricane Grace. The Haitians are good people who have long struggled. The struggle does not end. All of us grieve the loss of life, whether here at home or in some distant land. Death and tragedy pile up and I, shall I say we, have all become weary!

I am greatly disturbed by the news from Afghanistan – a place where over the past twenty years too many American lives have been lost and injured and trillions of dollars have been spent to hold up a government not embraced by the people and corrupt and ineffective. Countless numbers of persons living in Afghanistan have died, been injured, and tragically more will suffer in this time of transition. Along the way, mistakes have been made.

“When will we ever learn . . .” that the road to true and equitable peaceful co-existence will not be established by the weapons of war. “War makes war – peace makes peace.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:15 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible.* Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Song written and sung by John Gorka *War Makes War* <https://youtu.be/ksqvgjry-WE>

I know that may be simplistic, but I think it is true. Rather consensus building, truth-telling, diplomacy, face-to-face encounters, with compromise – though long, perhaps generational hard work – these are the way to equitable peace between the diversity of the peoples of the world. And frankly, that work begins in our families and our communities. We model different, and faithful ways to conflict resolution.

The nations of the world through millenniums past have learned the art of war. We know how to fight, destroy, and kill. Weapons of mass destruction have been created and stored by numerous nations, and if used, these weapons could easily destroy life on earth as we know it. Have we taken the time to follow another path? Yes, there will always be major conflicts, but can we implement ways to reason with one another for the good of the human family?

I think we are standing on the cusp of an evolutionary advancement, humankind simply living with humankind. Humankind finally turning from the futility of war and the machinery of war. The results of war are devastating, especially as we once again watch the events in Kabul. In the Beatitudes, Jesus says “*Blessed are those who are gentle (or peacemakers): they will inherit the land.*”<sup>3</sup> Will we be gentle? Will we become peacemakers, within our families and communities, within our country and nations, within this fragile blue planet called earth?

On March 31, 1968, speaking in the National Cathedral, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “*We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.*” May we, together, lean into that “arc of the moral universe” and bend it in the direction toward justice with gentle, peaceful, and productive co-existence.

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:5 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible.* Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.