

Dear Friends,

I hope the day finds you well and you are blessed by the light of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As I write this sentence to start many of my emails and letters to Friends I know that it is not the case. I'll get right to it.

How can we say we are well and our lives are blessed when around us is tremendous evil which we do not have an unwavering unity against?

We are a Society of Friends founded to be in union to bring The Light to the world, but have we not fractured and separated ourselves as the worldly society has?

When do we come together and let God lead?

How do we find the will our Lord has for us to resolve the evils of this world and bring God's peace and love to it?

Do we not see how we squander our great heritage as discerned way finders, peace builders, freers of people, only to serve our own egos and desires?

While I have languished over these questions, others have come to take the name of Christ and have become what Christians ought to be, radical. But they have not radicalized in the way Jesus and his message were, rather in violent and vile ways to impress upon others a way of being.

Jesus intended for us to go out and be radical as he was and give a new way of life to his people all over the world. To radicalize them with love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, things to transform them and our world to what God wants it to be.

Friends understood this and it is part of our faith's foundation. But we have allowed matters that do not concern God cloud our way and take away the reigns from Jesus to put them squarely in our hands. During this time others have come to flourish claiming theirs is the way. Their perverted interpretations of God's will has given us nothing but hate and violence, the antithesis of the way of Jesus. And the world has labeled these so called Christians as Jesus was labeled by those who were against him in his time. These new radical Christians use this to further stoke their fire and prove they are just like Jesus, for they are marked just as he was. Their ways and this branding tarnishes the name of our Lord. It diminishes our faith and practice, our Society of Friends. It is why we don't see that many people in our pews these days.

Friends were once thought to be radical in the practice of our faith. We must take back that banner of radical Christians, and like the founder of our Society of Friends, George Fox, be profound in our proclaiming the word of Christ Jesus. We must proclaim with reverent joy, all are not only wanted in God's Kingdom but in a personal relationship with him. Like Christ Jesus himself be a radical in preaching the love of God and the righteousness of God that is brought to bare when we love our neighbor as our self.

We must come at those who use the label of Christian as a banner to move their blasphemous worldly desires forward not bearing arms, but with our bare arms. Arms open to embrace them with love, forgiveness, and the recognition of their worth and our desire to have them bring fruit to the tree of love in the Kingdom of God. Should they strike us down and take our lives so be it, let them. Our life is not here it is with our Lord God Christ Jesus in the eternal. Let others call us fools, let them say it cannot be done, let them try to take our hope and our lives knowing we will never return any in kind. For we live by the example of our God who gave his life without resistance or anger or violence.

Jesus came with love and forgiveness in the face of unspeakable hate and harm. A radical way of being when he had all the power of God behind him to strike his murders down. When given the chance to curse and spit upon them he chose to asked for them to be forgiven. So let us do the same, lets us be radicals who go where others would say it is foolish to go and let us proclaim our unceasing faith and offer to bring those back who have strayed from The Light. Let us leave vengeance with God who will have it as it is fit for God to have. We go forth with absolute love.

Let us once again be the Society of Friends respected for our convinced nature, our integrity in our faith and our way of living, our stewardship to the world and neighbors God gave us. Let us again be a force of radical faith that brings us to quake with the almighty power of God within us. Let us be Friends and make Friends and bring that of God in everyone to the forefront. Let us brighten the light of the world in us and others.

Friends this means confronting racism radically. This means confronting war radically. This means confronting health and wealth inequality and inequity radically. This means confronting housing and hunger radically. This means confronting sexism radically. This means confronting stewardship of the Earth radically. This means confronting human rights radically. This means confronting those who use the name of our God in vein radically. And so much more.

Friends this means discomfort, pain, and suffering for us. We can and must endure so that all can flourish as God intends. And it must be now.

May God be with you and may the light within you burn bright. Know courage with God's care over you as you press on to confront the evil of this world that can no longer be allowed to stand. May you be an example of Jesus's commandment alive in this world and know my prayers for you will never cease. Be well nourished in body, mind, and spirit so you can do this work God has called you to do. You are my brother, my sister, my Friend. I am grateful for you. The Lord bless you and keep you forever.

In Friendship and peace,
David Josiah Smith