

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

Greetings and peace my friends!

This morning I woke up to witness yet another tragedy within our larger community. Dr. Rachel Levine, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, who in my opinion, has offered the commonwealth incredible and insightful leadership through the current global pandemic, has publicly responded to a number of attacks made against her on social media, and in news outlets because of her gender identity.

My guess is that a few who are reading this reflection are already angry that once again I will speak to the issue that I am about to speak to. Yet, I will say anew, what has been said before from the pulpit, from various reflections, in both private and public conversations. The ground at the base of the cross is LEVEL, and we, God's children here on earth are called to advance God's simple and direct proclamation of LOVE in this world!

Dr. Levine has acquitted herself both responsibly and professionally in the public square. Her concerns and her goal in life, at least from my perspective, seems to be to seek the common good of the people of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania in regard to health. In her own words she says, "I have no room in my heart for hatred and frankly I do not have time for intolerance. My heart is full with a burning desire to help people and my time is full with working towards protecting the public health of everyone in Pennsylvania from the impact of the global pandemic due to COVID-19."

Now I ask you my friends, do those who make hateful, joking, or vile comments about Dr. Levine's gender identity or do Dr. Levine's own words seem more consistent with our Scriptural understanding of how God desires we live within the world. You be the judge!

I have been honored and privileged to count among my closest friends of this world people who identify themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ community. I have been honored and privileged to serve in defense of this country with women and men who self-identified as "African American, Hispanic, Asian. Trust me when I say that all the people whom I have met and experienced in my life; those whom I call "friend", and those who I saw as "enemy", have the same kind of blood running through their veins, which run through my own. All the people of this world have similar feelings, we feel the pains of insults, we feel the profound sense of shame that the world inflicts upon us at times, and we know when we are among people who accept us and value us for simply being our genuine and authentic self that our gracious Lord has created us to be.

THE GROUND AT THE BASE OF THE CROSS IS LEVEL! YOU BE THE JUDGE!

Did Christ not come to the world in human flesh to share with the world how much we are loved and valued by our God? And if we are loved and valued by our God do, we not believe that God loves and values all human life, indeed all of creation?

THE GROUND AT THE BASE OF THE CROSS IS LEVEL! YOU BE THE JUDGE!

Did not Christ willingly offer His own mortal life to demonstrate for all the lengths that God would go through to model what true unconditional love looks like in the face of human judgment, persecution, and hatred? And if our God goes to such great lengths to insure that the world would once and for all know of the graciousness and mercy of our Lord, do we not believe that our Lord desires those of us who would call ourselves "Christian", to share a measure of the same kind of graciousness and mercy to those around us in the world that has been shared with us?

My heart is burdened by what I see and experience in the world around me. Yet, I have hope my friends! I have hope because people like Dr. Levine model for us all how we are called to treat one another. I have hope, because many among you have hearts that ache like my own with the evil and vile judgements cast upon good people. I have hope, because only through God's own words and life are, we able to appropriately share with one another and with the world around us how faithful people are called to live in relationship with God and with one another. I have hope, simply because in my heart of hearts I genuinely believe that THE GROUND AT THE BASE OF THE CROSS IS LEVEL! How about you?

Until next time!

Keep trusting God, keep washing those hands, and be at peace with our God and with one another!

PJ