

I'll share a story about a Civil War general and a Quaker pacifist farmer. They had a two hour discussion about life, religion, philosophy and more. And at the end of the discussion the general turned to the Quaker and said, "Friend, if all in the world were like you, I'd turn and follow after." To which the Quaker replied, "Then you have the mind to be one of the last people in the world to be good. I have a mind to be one of the first, and set the example."

Loving and Holy God, we come here today first and foremost to praise you and worship you. But we know that in doing that we are ourselves refreshed, renewed, made joyful because we know that we are loved and heard and blessed by you. Our fears are calmed, our hope restored, and we are reminded of what is important, what is holy, what it means to bear the name of Christ as Christians in this world. And Lord, we confess, that sometimes when it comes to living out our Christian faith, we just want to go along, making as few waves as possible. We are willing to claim our faith, but not to proclaim it. We are willing to serve, just not sacrificially. We are willing to listen to others with patience, as long as they agree with us. We are willing to forgive, as long the person expresses their sorrow and knows how hurt we are. Yes, Lord sometimes we don't have the mindset to step out and be the example of what it means to truly follow Christ. Help us remember that Jesus said we are to be his "witnesses." Paul said we are "ambassadors for Christ." Martin Luther said we are to be "little Christs" to all we meet. And so forgive us our complacency, our lack of courage, our weak determination. Give us strength, give us wisdom, give us your words, that we might be an inspiration to others in the way we come across, the way we interact, in the way we live our lives. That Christ might be glorified, and those around us edified.

Lord we pray for others this day. We pray for our country, as we have had to deal with yet more violence and hatred this week. Be with the victims, their families, first responders and all of us who feel the pain of a society in disarray. Calm us, heal us, create in us a new way of thinking, of being, of striving to be more active to bring your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Help us 'set the example' of what it means to sow seeds of love, of peace, of healing. Lord, we pray for individuals..

John Wesley prayer