

***Theme for 2018***

**WE ARE THE ARMY OF GOD &  
WE ARE ARMED AND DANGEROUS!**

*“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)*



***This Week’s Thought – December 16, 2018***

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*“Be at peace among yourselves...” 1 Thessalonians 5:13 (NRSV)*

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Advent is a season of patient preparation and expectant waiting. Each week during this time, we are invited to reflect on themes that lie at the heart of the incarnation of Jesus. As we reflect, we are asked to shine a light into our own hearts, asking if what is true of Jesus is also true in some way of us. Are we a people who cling to an unshakable hope? Do we know the unspeakable joy of God drawing near?

Today and this week, I invite you to reflect for a few moments on the theme of peace. Jesus spoke a great deal about peace, and yet, His words are not always as straightforward as we might like! For example, in Matthew 10:34 we find Jesus saying, *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”* Not quite what you’d expect from the **Prince of Peace**, is it? Whenever I read this verse, I think of one of my favorite Eugene Peterson quotes, where he reminds us, *“When Jesus said that He came to bring not peace but a sword He was talking of the peace that allows persons to vegetate in sins and the sword that separates us from them.”*

This Advent, I challenge you to take some time to identify places in your life that you may have accepted a false peace. Ways in which your life may be stable and lacking conflict, yet asleep to the deeper things of God and blind to your sins and shortcomings. I believe this is Paul’s heart in 1 Thessalonians. He seeks to awaken this early church community to a life lived with God through the power of the Spirit.

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He reminds them that this is a gift given to them by God (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24), and as they receive this gift for themselves, they are set free to give their lives away in radical, self-giving love towards the other.

If you feel restless and anxious, look no further than the Prince of Peace. Yet be open to a season of renovation that may require a painful reordering of your loves and affections. Like a knife in the hand of a skillful surgeon, the Lord brings his “*sword*” towards us with great love and affection, promising to set us free to truly know and encounter his perfect peace.

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”* (Colossians 3:15)

**Application:** Are there places in your life that you’ve accepted a false peace that keeps you content and stable, but distant from the Lord? During your time of meditation and reflection, ask the Lord to grant you, above all else, to rest in Him, that your heart may find its peace in Him alone; for He is the heart’s true peace, its sole abiding place, and outside God all is hard and restless. In this true peace that is in Him, the Sole, Supreme, and Eternal Good, seek to dwell and take your rest.

**Prayer of reflection you might pray this week:** “I praise You Lord, from the depths of my heart, and I give thanks for Your goodness, for Your grace, for Your mercy, all of which comes through the gift of Your Son. I seek to bring You glory every day of my life through my words and my deeds. You have given me so many blessings; make me a joyful Christian, a worthy example to others, and a dutiful servant to You. My desire is to honor You, Father with all that I am. This is my prayer in the matchless, wonderful and compassionate name of Jesus, Amen!”

*“And then God answered: “Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what’s coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn’t lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It’s on its way. It will come right on time.”* Habakkuk 2:2-3 (MSG)

Yours in Christ, Pastor King