

*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 23, 2018***  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

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*“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*  
Ephesians 5:1-2  
(NIV)

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Just as physical identity is defined by traits passed on by the parents, so our true core identity is defined by the image of God: the Father's wisdom, the Spirit's strength, the Son's love. Our unchanging identity in Christ defines what we do, what we have, how we feel and what others think in place of the pointlessness of defining ourselves with temporal ever changing categories.

Paul describes followers of Jesus as dearly loved children who are to walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. ‘*Dearly loved to walk in the way of love...*’, wow! What freedom to be who God made us to be: loved dearly by our Father in heaven, so we can love others on earth with His same selfless love. Like a beloved child of caring parents, we follow God's example in how we treat others. Who we are in Christ is defined by God's image in us and His influence on us. We live attractive lives when our life is defined by our loving Lord.

*"When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with*

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*inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong.”* (Ephesians 3:14-17, NLT)

You are free to be who God made you to be. Feelings come and go. They are an indicator of what’s in your heart, but your emotions do not define the core of who you are.

What others think about you is probably more or less than you deserve, but God knows what’s in your heart. You are His precious child created for doing good. So, do good with and for the Lord. The possessions you enjoy are nice, but they will only have their proper place in your life if Jesus possesses your heart. If all you have disappeared, would your identity fly away with your stuff or would you rest secure as a beloved child of God? In Christ, you are a dearly loved child who walks in the way of love. Be generous with your possessions and you will free their influence in defining you. Who are you? A dearly loved child of God, who walks in love!

*“And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”* (Ephesians 3:18-19, NLT)

**Application:** This Advent, we prepare for Christmas by remembering the nearness of our incarnate Lord. This, indeed, is cause for great joy. A life lived well celebrates well. What has the Lord done in your life that invites a celebratory occasion? Perhaps you use this time to tell your story of God’s faithfulness. Life celebrations memorialize God’s favor in your life.

***Words from the Master during your time of reflection this week: “Try to imagine what I gave up when I came into your world as a baby. I set aside My Glory so that I could identify with you and mankind. I accepted the limitations of infancy under the most appalling conditions---a filthy stable. That was a dark night for Me, even though angels lit up the sky proclaiming, “Glory!” to awestruck shepherds. When you sit quietly with Me, the process I went through is reversed in your experience. As you identify with Me, heaven’s views open up before you---granting you glimpses of My Glory. I became poor so that you might become rich. Glory Hallelujah!”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 2:6-7; Luke 2:13-14; 2 Corinthians 8:9)

*“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