

## **Advent Devotional December 11, 2018**

### **Scripture**

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

<sup>12</sup>But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; <sup>13</sup>esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. <sup>14</sup>And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. <sup>15</sup>See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. <sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. <sup>25</sup>Beloved, pray for us. <sup>26</sup>Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup>I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. <sup>28</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

### **Devotional**

#### **Dr. Helen Blier, Director, Office of Continuing Education**

When my children were little, we had two rules in our house: Be Kind and Do Your Job. (Later on, when the eldest became a teenager, Tell the Truth was added, but that's another story.) The challenge was to identify what simple rules would best name the behaviors that let us live as a family by lifting up some of the practices required of love without burden or distraction? These two rules worked for us, and they grew as the kids grew. When they were little, being kind and doing their job meant fair play on the playground and brushing teeth before bed. As they got older, it got more complex—time management, making good choices about friends, leveraging their privilege in behalf of the common good. Over and over again, the simple rules became an invitation to have important conversations about what we are called to do as family members, community dwellers, Christians, children of God. (And if you ask me, I think the two of them are turning out pretty well!)

Paul's exhortation to his friends in Thessalonica isn't so much a laundry list of behaviors or rules to follow—it's naming some of the things that happen when the Spirit is present and people live in the joy of the Good News. And what's obvious to me is how much Paul really *loves* these people! The delight he takes in them is infectious. He wants them to do the right thing because he wants them to participate in the promises of Christ—and in his enthusiasm he's reminding them of what makes that possible. Seek good for all. Give thanks always. Greet others with delight. Rejoice! In other words, be kind and do your job. These are the hallmarks of love practiced, the conditions that create welcome, as he says, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in addition to commanding his friends to do, Paul participates in this joyful expression himself.

As we head toward the third and joyful Sunday of Advent, what can you do to make sure that this love, practiced in delight, marks your own preparation for the coming of the Christ child?

### **Prayer**

Dear Lord, on behalf of my beloved community,

May we pray without ceasing

Give thanks without reason

Do good to all because it is good to do—

And in doing so welcome the Christ child with joy and love into this, our human family.