

## **Advent Devotional December 7, 2018**

### **Scripture**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup>For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; <sup>4</sup>that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup>not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. <sup>8</sup>Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you. <sup>9</sup>Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; <sup>10</sup>and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, <sup>11</sup>to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, <sup>12</sup>so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

### **Devotional**

**The Rev. Dr. Richard W. Wingfield '02/'13, Senior Pastor, Unity Baptist Church, Braddock, Pa. / Metro-Urban Institute Advisory Council**

Encouraging words can go a long way. Well-chosen words can inspire even the most challenging person to do even more to accomplish any goal. For sure, there were times when you needed that kind word to motivate you to do more than what you're doing. You knew your assignment, yet you wondered whether it was worth all the trouble. You were facing so many obstacles and so much opposition. Frustration had set in and you were ready to resign from everything. But someone came along side you at the right moment, placed a hand on your shoulder, and encouraged you to 'keep on keepin' on' despite the difficulties.

Today's passage challenges us to continue to do more and more in pleasing God. Paul encourages these young believers in Thessalonica, "You've come a long way. Great job! You're doing well. But there is always room for improvement. I need you to abound more and more in those areas."

Life in Christ is never static. It's a continual process of growth. There are areas where you have flourished—great job! But there are also areas, personally and communally, where you can improve. Be careful never to allow complacency in your walk with Christ, for that's your biggest enemy. Spiritual complacency denies a believer's verbal confession. Though you've made progress, there are still areas where your life can be strengthened.

Everyone lives to please someone, whether your spouse, your parents, your children, your boss, even your friends. To do that, you work harder. You do the extra things, the little things, to please that someone.

Our task is ultimately to please God. You're doing good things. You've made great strides. Keep doing more and more. Stay the course. "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58).

### **Prayer**

Dear God, help us to please you in every aspect of our lives. Help us to speak an encouraging word to someone, even as we recognize our own need of that same word at times. Help us never to become so complacent or inwardly focused that we lose sight of our ultimate purpose, to please you.