

Advent Devotional December 1, 2019

Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Devotional

The Rev. Darren J. Rogers '17

It is difficult to be an encourager and look outside our private world when the integrity of society is breaking apart before our very eyes and institutions that seemed rock-solid are crumbling like brittle soil on a hot summer day! We are relentlessly bombarded with reports of mass shootings and divisive and inflammatory rhetoric from elected leaders entrusted to proclaim and protect "liberty and justice for all." The challenge to stay positive when faced with tragedy, illness, and loss is overwhelming—especially during Advent, when peace and goodwill are heralded from the mountaintops while so many are hopelessly struggling through the darkness of the valley.

Our quick fix is to insulate our minds from the distress and to blame others for our condition. We can deep-dive into work, serving, or pleasure-seeking, but the pain is still present when we come up for air. These kinds of solutions only drive us farther away from the One who can reassemble and illuminate this complicated puzzle we call life!

Jesus Christ entered our world of pain and sorrow to give his life for all to become God's children through Christ—God's *children*, "who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13), thus giving us the power and clarity to encourage and strengthen one another.

The birth, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ enable and entitle us to put on the breastplate of faith and love, along with the helmet of the hope of salvation! By the grace of God we are given new life and light to navigate through the darkness, confusion, and pain that blind humanity! "But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day . . ." (vv. 4-5a). "So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober . . . since we belong to the day" (vv. 6, 8a).

Prayer

Father, thank you for the grace given through Jesus Christ, who through love alone sacrificed his life for all! Lord, help us look away from darkness and focus our eyes on you. We pray that your light will guide our steps and fill our hearts with hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.