

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.
Amen.

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NLT2) ⁹*The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! From now on you will be at war.*”

Isaiah 66:2 (NLT2) ²*My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! “I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.*

God’s eyes are especially on all who belong to Him. God never takes his eyes off you. God desires for you to be fully committed to him. To those who are fully committed to God, God promises to strengthen your heart.

Next Sunday we begin a new season in the church, the season of Advent. I will introduce next Sunday the spiritual disciplines I want all of us to participate and involve ourselves in. We have some serious work to do, not busy work, but serious work. God wants our hearts fully committed to Him. We are asking God to clean out our hearts so we can recognize Jesus more fully and celebrate Christmas strengthened by God. God is not satisfied with only part of your heart dedicated to God. God wants your entire heart, soul, mind, and strength, your entire being committed to him. Most of us are not there yet. We have kept part of our lives from God. We have not fully surrendered to Him.

1. **Any part of your life that you hold back from God becomes a stumbling block, something that trips you up.** We have an inner war with God inside of our hearts. “God, I know I should give over to you that part of my life that I am holding onto. Not now, maybe later.” And when we do this our personal fellowship with God grows strained. Something inside of us knows God wants every aspect of us to belong to God. To let it go, to give it all over to God is the right thing to do, but oh how hard that is. **Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ *Let us also lay aside*

every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. 2. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.”

The IRS received this note. “ I am sending a check because I did not pay in full for my taxes.” “I was unable to sleep so I sent this check.” If I still cannot sleep, I will send the remainder of what I owe.” Whatever we hold back from God can even keep us awake at nights.

Recently I had an 11-year battle with God. I knew the right thing to do but I refused to do it because I thought someone else should do it. Why can't other people see what I see. After eleven years of a bad attitude building up on the inside, the issue became resolved. I became even angrier that it took so long. Then there came a life changing email. The problem that I saw was not a problem at all. What I thought should have been taken care of had been taken care of all along. What I was so angry about was not even a problem. I wasted so much time and energy fuming at something that had already been taken care of. I can't blame my hair loss on this growing inner resentment, but I now see I was at battle with myself and God. My heart was not right. My heart was not fully committed to God in this particular area. And if it was, the resolution would have been immediate. Things were happening that I knew nothing about. “Lord Jesus, please forgive me for building grudges and resentments and not fully surrendering this part of my life over to you.” “Forgive me for battling with you when you had already won the war.”

On this Christ the King Sunday, it is good and healthy for all of us to humble ourselves before our King of King's and Lord of Lord's. To do so is to admit that we are completely dependent on God for everything for apart from God we can do nothing. God is looking everywhere to find people whose hearts are fully committed to him. And when he finds them, their hearts are strengthened. You will find yourself loving and serving God in ways that deeply enrich your life. You were running on near empty and now God's Presence has filled you up. Stop and be filled. “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.”

Christ our King died on the cross so we can be at peace with God. There is also the horizontal ministry of Christ the King on the cross. **2. God desires for us to be at peace with each other.** **Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)** ²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

3. Friends, the more committed to God that you are, God asks of you to reach out to others who you have offended. God will hold you accountable on judgment day for every word spoken. During this advent, one way of humbling ourselves before God is to work on your friendships that have been damaged and in great need of repair.

To take it one step further, you may have been terribly hurt by a person and you have grown resentful. **4. It is time to go to that person, prayerfully, humbly, and tell the person how hurt you have been.** Most often they have no idea. At best you may win the friendship back. At the least, you did this out of your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and God will somehow honor your deepening commitment.

This week I had one of those talks with a person who is very important to me. The person told me pain I had caused. I asked the person for forgiveness and thanked the person for expressing the pain. The conversation went well and we both sensed God’s Presence in the conversation. We promised to keep the lines of communication open. This was not an easy conversation for either of us, but I call it a life changing experience.

Sometimes we think we are so right when we could not be more wrong. It takes humility to recognize how one contributes to the breakdown of a relationship. It is so easy to think, “It is their fault.” “It couldn’t possibly be my fault – moi!”

Romans 12:17-19 (NIV) ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with

everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Friends, I believe we are in a season where God is purifying us. God is pruning away the areas in our lives where we are not bearing fruit so we can bear all the more. I believe God is calling us to deepen our friendships one with another. When God purifies and purges us, God also brings healing to broken or stalled Christian friendships. During these difficult days, our Christian friendships are like life preservers keeping our heads above water.

The Bible says, "confess your sins to one another in order that you might be healed." In order to be fully committed to God, God asks us to rid ourselves of those things that entangle us and trip us up in this life, those sins that weigh us down. The purification process makes our sin smell putrid, like people who try to hide that they smoke but you can smell it on them immediately. When God has us in the purification process, our sin smells more than ever. It's embarrassing. We think we might be getting away with it, but it is obvious to those who know us.

During Advent we are asking God to cleanse us of all our sin. We are asking God to heal our broken or damaged relationships. We are asking God to rid us of our long-held grudges and resentments. Yes, we have much work to do, important work. This is why Jesus came, so we can be right with God, fully committed to God, and right with each other. Christmas is coming – Yay.

I want us to pray to that end. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves before you acknowledging your Kingship over all things. Please forgive us for holding parts of ourselves back from you. Please forgive us for only being partially committed to you. Forgive us for holding onto things that you call us to give over to you. Forgive us for where we allow the pleasures of sin to dominate our lives and forfeit the blessings of obedience. Please help us all to take our next step of faith. In the name of Jesus. Amen.