"Children Of The Light"

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,
you do not need to have anything written to you.

For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord
will come like a thief in the night.

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!

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;
we are not of the night or of darkness.

So then let us not fall asleep as others do,
but let us keep awake and be sober;
for those who sleep sleep at night,
and those who are drunk get drunk at night.

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.

For God has destined us not for wrath
but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep
we may live with him.

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other,
as indeed you are doing.

Children Of The Light

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Sunday November 15, 2026

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I.

On any given week there is much fodder on which to preach. Sometimes, though, we miss the obvious. So this morning I would like to speak with you about Veteran's Day, which our nation observed last Wednesday, an occasion to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good. Known at the time as "The Great War," World War One officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, outside the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting had ceased 7 months earlier when an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars."

II.

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words:

"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations…"

The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m. Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen in the Nation's history, and after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, Congress, at the urging of the veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 which created Armistice day, calling it, instead, Veteran's Day.

III.

According to the Census Bureau, 5.9% of the adult American population, or 15.7 million people, identified as veterans in 2025. 12% of all veterans are woman. 32% of all veterans have at least one disability. The rate of suicide among veterans is 39.3 out of 100k. This is double the rate for non-veterans. Between 2005 and 2025, the total number of veterans fell by 7.7 million, or nearly 33%. Among these are 41.6k World War II veterans, the so called "Greatest Generation." No argument there. 367k are Korean War veterans. 4.9 million are Vietnam War era veterans whose service and sacrifice was no less great, and that we as a nation did not convey this to them is a shame we still bear. 4 million are Gulf War veterans. There are 4.7 million veterans of Post 9/11 Wars. In 2026 our nation spent 445 *billion* dollars on veteran's benefits; 223 billion for pay and pensions, and 170 billion for medical programs.

IV.

So many veterans have sacrificed so much for our nation in not being present for the birth of their children, the death of their parents, in the lost opportunities for career advancement, and in the time away from their families which they will never regain. And, of course, so many have given the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. Rather than throw a few big numbers at you, I would like to frame this to you in terms of the number of deaths per day: The War on Terror .77 deaths each day; Vietnam 26 deaths each day of the war; Korea 45 deaths each day; WWI 279 deaths each day; WWII 416 deaths each day and the Civil War, which saw 599 citizens give up their lives each and every day. *(Let's allow a few moments of silence in honor of these men & woman…)*

V.

I tell you all of this today for two reasons. First, to remind us of the huge debt we owe to all the men and woman who have served, or still serve our county; that we might simply pause to say, "Thank You." Second, to point out to you something so stunningly obvious it is simply amazing that we, as individuals, a nation and human society often lose sight of it. Namely, that there is a *reason* for all of this sacrifice and cost: there is a battle which rages between the darkness and the light. I fully concede the economic motivations of the industrial military complex. I readily admit if woman ran the world, or at least a representative fair share of it, there would be far fewer wars. And I wholly reject any effort to romanticize or glorify war. But darkness, and the evil behind it, is an undeniable part of human existence.

VI.

There is much that divides us as a nation, political polarization seems to have reached a new extreme. Was the Iraq War just about oil? I don't know. I do know there were some very bad people doing a lot of very bad things there for a very long time. Was the Afghanistan War an ill-advised, knee jerk reaction to 9/11? I don't know. I do know that the brutality of the former regime, especially with regard to woman, is nauseating. Is the emergence of the Islamic state in Syria and Iraq a result, directly or tangentially, of our nation's geopolitical influence and involvement in the region; probably. What we seem to forget, though, in the midst of the finger pointing and recriminations is that there are very real forces of evil in our world; and, that to one degree or another, darkness inhabits all our hearts.

VII.

In this his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul give clear warning that in the very midst of peace and security sudden destruction will come like a thief in the night. Paul foretells of a reckoning which will bring to the world an inescapable justice. One to which, save for the cross, we also would fall victim. Though this is surely important information to have, what concerns us most this morning is Paul's claim that we are all "children of the light." Just as we forget the nature and reality of evil in the world, and the corresponding need we have to call upon the bravery and sacrifice of our citizens so, too, do we forget the nature and reality of the power of the light in our lives, and the corresponding need we have to call upon ourselves to *bring* that light to bear upon our world.

VIII.

A quick review of the local and national news shows us so many places we need to shine a light. Wars in Gaza, the West Bank, Sudan, and the Ukraine. The 27 million people who are victims of human trafficking. The 840 million women age 15 and up who will experience physical and sexual violence this year. One out of every three women on the planet. Beyond these, we also need to shine a light on our respect for veterans as it relates to the care of their bodies at VA Hospitals, the care of their minds through continued services and support, and for the care of their remains as they come home from wars both current and past. Not only do we need to shine this light of ours upon others and their misdeeds, we must also be intentional about using this light to chase ourselves out of the shadows within which we often hide.

On Veteran's Day we often hear about such things as duty, honor, service, and commitment. These are the very same characteristics which describe the children of the light.

IX.

As I try to do every year, as both a citizen and a clergy person, on Wednesday I attended the Veteran's Day service held at the Canton VFW. Listening to those who spoke, both the humble and the eloquent, seeing Post members in uniforms which seem to shrink a bit more each year, recognizing neighbors, friends, and church members among the participants and guests, I was struck by the unequivocal goodness of the act and those who undertook it. Sometimes it is easier to remember the offense and their associated location, as in the Alamo and the Maine, than it is to remember the honor, service, and commitment of those who where in such places, and the countless other nameless fox holes, jungles, oceans, mountains, and deserts where our service men and women have displayed such profound commitment. So I felt privileged Wednesday morning, on gray November day which bade winter welcome to stand in the company of those who were gathered there to remember.

X.

Similarly, as we gather *here* today, I would like *us* to remember that the struggle between darkness and light isn't only waged by soldiers on battlefields, it is also waged by people of faith who, each day, with sober vigilance put on the breast plate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation. People like you, who are awake to the ever present struggle between the forces of good and evil in this world. People like you, who have answered the call to fortify and preserve this bastion of grace, this stronghold of mercy known as the Church on the Park. People like you, veterans in the battle against fear, ignorance, injustice, and death. People like you, who humbly serve our God, and all of God's children, with the same honor and commitment which God has shown to us, encouraging one another and building up each other. People like you, who count neither the times or the seasons, knowing full well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night and that we, as children of the light, will be prepared to answer the call. Amen.