

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/7/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 8 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for peace for the people of the Ukraine. Ask God to bring about a de-escalation of tensions on the border between the Ukraine and Russia. Pray that the Holy Spirit might inspire the international community to advocate for and to play a productive role helping to maintain calm and bring peace to this region.*

Acts 17:6 contains a phrase that I have always loved and that I think the church needs to adopt as an intentional mindset. It comes in a narrative about how Paul and his companions were presenting the Christian message that was leading people in Thessalonica, both Jews and Gentiles, to become believers. A number of leading Jews became jealous of the success of Paul that they rushed to the home of Jason, whom they believed was housing the missionaries. In the New International Version of the Bible, we are then told, *but when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here."* The phrase that I like so much is the one presented here and in other Bible translations as *"These men who have caused trouble all of the world."* Some Bible translations have that phrase as *"These that have turned the world upside down."* But I best like the translation that comes closest to the Greek where it reads literally, *"These world upside down turners."*

This isn't the best way to put this grammatically, but I really like the idea of being world-upside-down-turners. The reason I like putting the phrase as world-upside-down-turners is because it is an ongoing term. It is something we are called to do all the time. It isn't something we have been doing, or something that we will be doing in the future only. It is what we need to be doing every day—anytime we see injustice, people in need, or people who haven't a relationship with the Lord. We are to be world-upside-down-turners all the time.

I also think it gives us a different perspective on what our role in God's kingdom is to be. There is so much in the world that just isn't right, that needs to be, well, upside-down-turned. Both in terms of sharing the Christian message with others, but also challenging the things in our world that are not in keeping with God's desire for God's children and creation. And it's important to realize that some of our work to fulfill God's plan for the world might not sit well with others, even to the point that they could challenge those efforts. Certainly, we are not called to "cause trouble all over the world," as the Thessalonian Jews accused Paul and his team of doing. But there are many things that could stand to be upside-down-turned. And if we are not going to be the world-upside-down-turners, who will?

Again, adopting this mindset can be powerful as we go about our days. Each time we are out in the world, we can be looking for the things that God wants us and needs us to be doing—promoting God's mercy, offering help to those in need, and living and speaking in ways that tell other about our faith. This is exactly what Jesus called us to do before He ascended into heaven. And as we have made the commitment to be His followers, we should be looking for the ways that we can help to bring about the kingdom of God every day. The greater our sense of obligation to this mission, the more often we will

be given the opportunity to carry it out. By the things you do, by the things you say, let everyone around you come to know that you are a world-upside-down-turners.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey