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**MESSAGE FOR LENT 2022**



CHRISTIANS enter into the Season of Lent this year amidst a world in conflict. Forces of evil are challenging the forces of good. Truth is twisted; peace shattered; people displaced. Death and destruction, war and violence, have impacted the lives of the people of Ukraine. The senseless, nationalistic driven policy of war and aggression by Russia's Putin challenges people of faith, people of good will, people of peace.

The message of Christ's Gospel this Lent challenges us to confront the world in which we live with the truth of God's Word, faith in God's righteousness, trust in God's sovereignty. The glory of human conquest is laid waste in the face of the glory of God. In the Gospel we read that from an exceeding high mountain the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Yet Jesus saw beneath Him not glory but the valley of our sins and failures, and just beyond that, His Cross.

Our Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry in the full knowledge that it would end with His passion, death and resurrection. God the Father had a plan from all eternity -- a plan of salvation for the redemption of the world. In His plan, God sent His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. For those who believe, who seek for God through the Cross of Christ, the glimpse of God's glory in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ is what enables us, emboldens us, guides us, to confront this world's challenges, this world's violence, this world's lies and false claims.

Here in this world, in our own time and lives, we face two wars: the war of nationalistic aggression stemming from one man's evil design; and the spiritual war waged by the devil for our souls. The courageous people of Ukraine, supported by the free world, are fighting the battle for their homeland and way of life. We too are called to fight, to wage spiritual warfare, in the battle for our souls. It is a war of evil against good, of spiritual darkness against the everlasting light of Christ, of the devil against humanity. In this war, you and I are the battleground. Evil strives against good within and around us, seeking to gain possession of our souls, to ensnare us, to turn us away from the path that leads to God. Saint Peter in his Epistle tells us that "our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist, stedfast in the faith." By our faith we are emboldened; made strong in Christ; armed with God's divine Word and Sacraments.

The snares of the devil are always being set, for that is the way of evil; but it is not the way of God. Saint James bids us: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you."

Our Lord withstood the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil to restore the obedience of fallen man to the commandments of God. In turn, Jesus offers to each of us the grace to withstand these same temptations in our own time, in our own lives. Jesus offers, in the place of sin and death, God's blessing and eternal life. He offers the peace which this world cannot give.

Through this Lenten season of prayer, fasting and self-denial, I bid you draw closer to God and come to know better the One who refused a crown without the Cross. May the peace of God, the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all in this holy Season.

*+Shane*