

Gracious God, you have called people to serve you and serve one another in this world. Some of those who are called find themselves in the throes of war and strife. Protect them and guide them, Lord, that they might see your call to protect and defend, so that all might live in peace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In this lesson, we extend our thinking about Christian Vocation and Two Kingdoms by examining how Luther felt about war and the salvation of soldiers.

Part 1 War and Soldiers Salvation

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1. What does the scripture writer say about war and peace in verse 8?

2. What value judgment does the scripture writer express about goodness or badness of war versus peace?

3. Given your answer to question 2 as well as examining the entire list of events that we experience in life, what might we infer about the scripture writer's attitude toward all of these events of our lives?

4. We've dealt with this question in previous lessons, but given the contrast of war and peace (and other things in this text) and the statement at the beginning of this list that "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." What might we be able to say about the presence of war in the world?

5. Does it bother you to know that war is part of the fabric of our sinful world? Why?

Read Luke 3:10-14

6. So, people are coming out to the wilderness to be baptized by John the Baptist. Some soldiers come up to John and they have been or (presumably) will be baptized.
 - a. What do they ask John the Baptist?

 - b. How does John the Baptist respond to the soldiers?

- 7a. Is there anything you MIGHT have expected John to urge about soldiers apart from what he said to them, given that he is announcing the coming Kingdom of God?

b. Why do you think John's call to the soldiers only includes these things and not more?

Read John 15:12-17

8. What commandment does Jesus give to the disciples?

9. What is the greatest love that can be show to another?

10. Consider Luther's thinking about soldiers and how their vocation is lived out. How does that vocation fit into Jesus' commandment?

Read John 18:1-19:25

11a. In verse 10, Simon Peter takes on the role of a "soldier." What does he do?

b. What is Jesus response to Peter?

c. Doesn't Peter simply do what Jesus told him to do in question 9 above? Why do you think Jesus respond as he does?

12. Look through each of the other actions of the soldiers in this story. For each action of/reference to soldiers, do they fit with what soldiers should be doing in their vocation according to what you learned about Luther in the video or do they not?

Part 2 What Does This Have to Do With My Life?

13. So, war is an ever-present part of our world today. How might we discuss the following conflicts in light of what we have learned in scripture and from Luther:

a. The invasion and ongoing war in Ukraine?

b. The ongoing conflict between Hamas/Gaza and Israel?

c. The US war on terror in Afghanistan