

**HEAD SEEKS ARMS**  
**Meditation, July 15, 2018**  
**Vacation Bible School Sunday**  
**Texts: Isaiah 48:17-18; Ephesians 1:1-14**

A July 2003 Reader's Digest article collected the following interesting newspaper headlines with some apparently unintentional double meanings:

"TEACHER STRIKES IDLE STUDENTS" Ouch. I feel sorry for those assaulted idle students.

"LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS CUT IN HALF" That seems like drastic punishment just for dropping out of high school.

"STUDENTS MAKE NUTRITIOUS SNACKS" And the cannibal readers replied, "Yum!"

The next one probably should have used the term "podiatrists," but instead reported: "HOSPITALS ARE SUED BY SEVEN FOOT DOCTORS."

How about this Toronto Star headline? "MEDICAL MARIJUANA ISSUE SENT TO A JOINT COMMITTEE."

The next one is really interesting: "MAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING FACES BATTERY CHARGE"

And this one following an accident at a local coal mine: "MINERS REFUSE TO WORK AFTER DEATH" You have to watch out for those mining companies. They'll make you work on and on and on ....

And one that actually became the title of a book of such headline flubs, which I just ordered on Amazon: "RED TAPE HOLDS UP NEW BRIDGE" Now, that's some strong tape!

And the headline that inspired today's sermon title, which came out sometime before the fall of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein: "IRAQI HEAD SEEKS ARMS."

"HEAD SEEKS ARMS." I think that's something of an appropriate headline of today's Epistle passage. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know that the Christian church isn't a building; it's a Body. And the Head of this Body is Jesus Christ, and this Body needs arms, arms that are actively engaged in embracing and servicing this world in His name all for the *"praise of God's glory,"* all functioning for God's glorious grace. As expressed so well by St. Teresa of Avila:

*"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*

The lectionary selection from Ephesians reads: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One he loves."*

Did you know you were adopted? An interesting little fact I learned earlier this week is that approximately twenty percent of our students who attended Vacation Bible School are adopted and/or foster children; they were uniquely and lovingly chosen by loving parents to be part of their families. But actually, *all* of us who part of the family of Jesus Christ are adopted; as John 3:16 reminds us, God only has one Son, and it is by faith in Him that we are adopted into the holy Family. Paul tells us that before the creation of the world, God *resolved* that we would be His children, lovingly and uniquely chosen by Him, destined for adoption in and through Jesus Christ ... Who is our "Head Seeking Arms."

Just a quick aside on that word, "predestination," about which so much ink has been spilled over the centuries. Please note that predestination has far less to do with who is "in" and who is "out" than it has to do with divine *resolve*: God *resolved* for us to be His adopted children who will be holy and blameless before Him through the costly grace of Jesus, to be the "arms" of His body, the Church, of which Jesus is the Head, so that we may live *"for the praise of His glory"* now and forever! *"For the praise of God's glory" ... now, I*

know those words may sound almost cliché-ish, somewhat akin to religious gobbledy-gook which has little or no practical application in life outside this sanctuary, but if understood and taken seriously, these words really do give us an all-encompassing purpose for our lives! Simply put, to *“live for the praise of God’s glory”* is to live each moment with purpose, to live each moment as if God is real to us, to live each moment as if we take Him and His precepts and His ideals and His mercy *seriously*, doing the work He has called us to do wherever He has placed us in this world.

As we heard earlier, there were five themes in our “ROLLING RIVER RAMPAGE” Vacation Bible School curriculum this week, five themes I think are touched on in our epistle lesson: FINDING (1) ADVENTURE, (2) ACCEPTANCE, (3) JOY, (4) REST and (5) PEACE ON THE RIVER. “FINDING ADVENTURE ON THE RIVER!” -- Embarking on the life of faith that is conscientiously lived each and every moment *“for the praise of God’s glory”* is certainly the **adventure** of a lifetime. FINDING ACCEPTANCE ON THE RIVER! -- We aren’t to try to play God, figuring who’s really “in” and who’s “out” ... no, we rejoice that we are accepted by God as we come to Him in faith through Jesus Christ, and then we go out to *live* for God, and to encourage others to do the same; to go out and live for *the praise of His Glory*, doing constructive, redemptive, loving, wholesome and helpful things, speaking good and encouraging and uplifting words, in short, being living embodiments of the glorious reality of the God we worship in all we do and say. And in doing so we FIND JOY, we FIND REST, and we FIND PEACE ... because in living *for the praise of His glory* we find the end of restlessness, as we find real purpose and solid meaning for our lives

Old Testament reading this morning reads: *“This is what the Lord says -- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, Who teaches you what is best for you (an alternate translation has, ‘What things will do you good’), Who directs you in the way you should go. Oh, if only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.”* This is the origin of that phrase, “peace like a river;” it is also mentioned in Isaiah 66. God really does want the best for all of us, He wants us to experience peace and well-being, but whenever we disregarding God’s commands it just takes us out of the “flow;” it robs us of that peace and well being that naturally flows from the “headwaters” on high.

*(The following was edited out due to time constraints; I include it here) I came across the following excerpt from a devotional commentary on this passage from Isaiah:<sup>1</sup> “A river begins from a source high above, the headwaters. Thanks to mountain snow-melt, the headwaters pour forth water, constantly feeding the river. The river, on its long journey from the headwaters, flows placidly at times, sometimes for miles and miles, meandering calmly through lush meadows. At certain junctures, where the bank bows inwards to create an inlet, it eddies, flowing in dizzying circles, going round and round and round, seemingly going nowhere. And at other sections along the way, the river encounters various obstacles: big boulders, felled trees, other debris. Yet the river flows on — around, under, even over these seemingly-impossible barriers. It even completely covers them in its relentless pursuit to its ultimate destination. Nothing can stop the river. Such is God’s peace. It continually and constantly flows from the “headwaters” of heaven. From Him alone comes our peace, for He is the source of peace. His peace flows in the long, placid stretches of good times, when everything is going well in our lives. His peace flows in the whirling eddies of our lives, when things just go round and round and round, seemingly going nowhere. Blessedly, His peace flows especially freely around, under and over the obstacles in our lives, when hard times hit, when life takes a turn for the worse, when we suffer some type of loss, when we encounter hardship, or some other tribulation. It is in these particular times when God’s peace completely covers us, guarding our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace.” (end of excerpt).*

And if we read our lesson from Ephesians carefully, we read God’s ultimate plan is for all things ... not just some things, not just an elect few ... for *all* things in heaven and on earth to one day come together under one head, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. That is why Christ came. *Our* part is to live for the praise of God’s glory ... being the *arms of Christ’s body* assisting in that gathering up of all things, and trust God will take care of the rest. This has been God’s resolution from the very beginning, from even before the very beginning. God ordered this universe in such a way that all things will be gathered to Him in and through Jesus Christ, so we may enjoy “peace like a river” now and forever.

Live for the praise of God’s glory. Live each moment taking God seriously, going to work as His arms and legs and hands and feet in this world ... and in so doing, may we find the ultimate in divine **Adventure, Acceptance, Joy, Rest** and **Peace** in the current of His gracious love.

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<sup>1</sup> For the full devotional, see <http://www.blogos.org/christianlifeandgrowth/peace-like-a-river.php>