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Pastor Joel Seifert of
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“And what should we do?” Luke 3:14

There's a reason the soldiers asked John the Baptist that question. The very nature of their work must have made heaven seem far off. As officers of the government, they needed to take action against their own people. When an order was given, their job was to comply – even if the morality of it seemed questionable. They faced hatred from some of their own people. And the violence... they were met with the worst in humanity and often had to respond with force to protect society. And themselves.

And the temptation to abuse that power was real – and the abuses were common. So when the “sinners” lined up to hear the Baptizer’s message of repentance and forgiveness, the soldiers were standing in line with their question: “And what should we do?”

They weren’t the last servants of the law to face those pressures. In the days of the Reformation, Martin Luther felt compelled to write a pamphlet, “Whether soldiers, too, can be saved.” It wasn’t a trivial question. The challenges are real. The pressures and difficult situations are real. The scrutiny – and even hatred – by their own countrymen are real. And the failures are real, too. They were in Christ’s day... and in Luther’s... and in ours.

John’s answer to the soldiers was simple. He didn’t call them to leave their profession, but he did remind them: where you’ve sinned, repent and trust in God’s

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forgiveness, and leave those sins behind. And there's a simple answer for our "what should we do?", too. God calls us to pray for "all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." (1 Timothy 2:2)

Almighty God, bless our land with faithful officers of the law. Where they sin, grant justice and forgiveness. Lead us to understand the challenges and pressures they face, and pray earnestly for them and all people, that we might live in peace and holiness. Amen.

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