



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 22, 2010
13th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon Text: [Ephesians 6:10-20](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [2 Kings 11:1-3, 12-18](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 139a](#)
Second Lesson: [Ephesians 6:10-20](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 12:49-53](#)

Be Strong In The Lord Get dressed in the Lord Speak fearlessly in the Lord

I remember as a child my father gathering us together, everyone that was living in the house at that time...my little sister, my older stepbrother, my older stepsister...and he sat us down and said, "If there's ever a fire in the house, here's what we are going to do. Here's how we are going to leave the house. If you're upstairs, here's the window you need to break. Here's what you need to put over the window. Here's what you need to jump. And here's where we'll meet in case of a fire." He sat us down and told us all that so that if that day would come, we'd be ready for it.

I would guess that in one way, shape or form, most of us have done that with our children. I don't think we've said to them, "Hey, if a fire starts, go get your Super Soaker and let's have at 'er boys!" That's not what we are going to tell our kids. We are going to get them ready to protect them, and get them out of the house, right? If left on their own, if you don't teach some of your kids ahead of time, you are going to have some kids that at times are going to want to go grab that Super Soaker and go put the fire out. You don't know when that day might come, but if it does come, you want to be ready.

In a sense, God was using the apostle Paul to sit down with the Ephesians and sit down with you and me and say to us, "Now, when the day of evil comes, when Satan is going to attack you, here's what you need to have done ahead of time and here's how you need to meet him. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." Don't try to take him on with your own Super Soaker. Be strong in the Lord, not in your own strength. That means that daily you need to get dressed in the full armor of God...not just try to hurriedly throw it on when you see Satan coming, but day after day after day get dressed in the full armor of God because that's where you get strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Then speak fearlessly in the Lord. That's what God has called us to do.

The words I just read to you kind of serve as a wrap up of Paul's whole letter to the Christians that were in Ephesus. He had written to tell them about a lot of things and now he is going to sum it all up with "Finally, be strong in the Lord. You want to know how to be strong in the Lord? Here's how. You put on the full armor of God." He also tells them why they need to be strong in the Lord. Their struggle isn't against flesh and blood. It isn't against those that might imprison them like Paul himself was. Their

struggle isn't against the authorities that had thrown Paul into prison. Their struggle isn't against those who oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ on this earth. Their struggle is against those who are behind those attacks. That is the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

When he talks about the rulers and authorities and powers of this dark world, he's not talking about any government. He's talking about the various ranks of evil angels and Satan himself who is our enemy. People might say "The devil is old fashioned. That's superstition from long ago," and that's one of the devil's lies. This is our struggle.

Whenever you and I are faced with temptation, ultimately that temptation, even if it comes from our own sinful nature, has its origin in Satan and his evil angels who led Adam and Eve into sin. That's who we're battling against. The one we are battling against is stronger than we are. That's why we need to be strong in the Lord. If we are going to rely on ourselves when these things that we read about in the other readings today come...Jesus says, "I've come not to bring peace but division"...you're going to have to take a stand against those who are against the Gospel at times. You are going to have to say "I am for Christ and at times that means I'm not going to be standing shoulder to shoulder with you even if you are my mother, my father, my brother" or whatever the case may be. That takes strength that's not ours because a lot of us don't like confrontation. We have to have a strength that's beyond ours. Since we recognize that any attack that comes through anyone else is ultimately an attack that is coming from someone that's not flesh and blood, we want to be strong in the Lord. That means daily putting on the full armor of God.

As Paul is writing this to the Ephesians, did you catch that at the end where he said "I am an ambassador in chains"? He was in prison. No doubt the chains might have been well attached to a Roman soldier. So as he describes this full armor of God, and quite often when Paul wrote he dictated to his secretary who wrote these things down, you could almost picture him looking at this Roman soldier, going from top to bottom of his armor and taking each piece and saying "Put on every day the belt of truth buckled around your waist." What he was looking at wasn't just a belt like some of you ran through some loops this morning just to hold your britches up. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about something that had a defensive purpose because the soldier of that day, when they went to strike the death blow, they were trying to go up through the groin or through the abdomen up to the heart. So this belt of truth was something that was protecting that area that would be attacked. It also held their sword. It also tied together the breastplate and some of these other things that he mentions. But this belt of truth buckled firmly around your waist that he's talking about is God's truth. Satan recognizes that God's truth is such a strong defense against his attacks that, what has he done in our postmodern world? He's got everyone to believe that truth is relative. "Your truth is your truth. My truth is my truth. But don't say there's an absolute truth. That's just not being tolerant enough." That's a load of garbage.

God himself says "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. Diligently search the Scriptures because by searching them you think you will find the truth." And you will.

God's truth centers in this fact that Jesus lived perfectly in our place and died in our place and that God credits his active obedience of being perfect in our place and his passive obedience of dying as the punishment for our sins to our account as righteousness. God's truth is that the Spirit leads us to believe this truth, whether he does it as an infant as we saw this morning, or whether he does it when we are adults when he works through the Word...in either case, it is just as incredible a miracle because by nature we are spiritually blind, spiritually dead, and enemies of God. We want nothing to do with his truth. He has to take us captive, kicking and screaming, and make us his own children. And he does it through his Gospel. That truth is what we need to have buckled around us day by day by day. That truth is what we need to continue to grow in day by day by day so that when the day of evil comes we are ready.

Like Job...Satan went before God and God said, "Look at Job. Is there anyone like Job?" Satan said "Yeah, you don't let me do anything to him. Let me do something to him and he'll curse you." The day of evil then came for Job. You know that story.

The day of evil will come for us when Satan will attack us with things that are going to trouble us, worry us, concern us, even lead us to doubt the promises of our God. Our defense against that is truth, God's truth. God's truth focuses on that breastplate of righteousness, that righteousness that Christ won for us. It focuses on the salvation that is ours, not by our efforts, but by his gift. And the God that loved us enough to give us free salvation loves us enough to be with us when the day of evil comes.

He tells us to take up the shield of faith. He's not talking about one of those little round things. He's talking about the 2'x4' shield that the Roman soldiers carried...the shield of faith that puts out the flaming arrows of Satan's attacks to say "God doesn't love you. God hates you. God is punishing you. God is this. Or God is that." When those flaming arrows come, faith, based on Word and Sacrament, puts those attacks out.

If you think "I don't really want to carry around the sword of the Spirit. I don't want to carry around the shield of faith. I'm going to face Satan's attacks with just the parts of the full armor of God that I want to use"...then you're an idiot. God has told you to put on the full armor of God day by day by day. Use all of it. Grow in knowledge of all of it. And if you're going to say, "I don't really want to. I was confirmed. I don't need to know any more"...you are going to face Satan in your own strength? That doesn't make much sense. You're not even using a Super Soaker on the fire. You're using one of those older squirt guns that shoots that little stream that goes this far and falls to the ground. That's what you're using.

God has called you to grow in your faith. God has called you to put on the full armor of God day by day. God has called you and told you that when you do it, he will strengthen you beyond what you can imagine so that you can face Satan's attacks and triumph. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy. That doesn't mean you are going to feel triumphant all the time. But if you keep your focus on God and not on yourself, God will do incredible things. He will even do this incredible thing...he will enable you to speak fearlessly as Paul says you should.

We are all kind of fearful about speaking. I think some of us here would rather run into a burning house than talk about our faith with someone else. That scares us. "Who am I to talk." Think about Paul. He says, "Pray for me that I speak fearlessly as I should." Here he is, he's chained to this soldier and now he's going to tell this soldier "I've got the answer to all of life's problems." The soldier is going to look at him and say "You're nuts! You're chained to me. I don't want to be like you." But he says, "Pray for me so that I don't think of all the reasons people will reject my message just because of my chains. Pray for me that I may speak so that the power of the Holy Spirit may work in the hearts of others." And Paul did that. He was an ambassador in chains. And he preached to whoever the Lord brought in front of those chains. He shared the Law. He shared the Gospel. And he did it fearlessly. So what's the worst they are going to do? Kill him? He's in heaven.

You and I don't have to be afraid that someone is going to kill us if we speak the Gospel. What we probably are afraid of at times is that we might lose a friend. If you don't speak the Gospel and they don't believe, I guarantee you that you'll lose a friend. You'll lose a friend for all eternity because they won't be in heaven with you. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. If you don't believe in him, you aren't going to be there. So you can risk the possibility of losing a friend now so that they might hear the Gospel and the Spirit might bring them to faith or might lead them back to Christ who they have strayed from. You can run that risk of losing that friend for a time maybe in this world, but having them for eternity. Or you can say, "I love you so much and value your friendship, I'd just as soon have you go to hell than have you get mad at me." Those are kind of our two choices, aren't they?

So if we put on the full armor of God, God works in us so that we will speak in love, with gentleness, with patience, and the Lord himself will give us the words to speak. That's only going to help when we daily put on the full armor of God.