

January 22, 2017
Sermon for Life Sunday (Third Sunday after Epiphany)
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Ephesians 6:10-24

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Ephesians 6:10–24 (ESV)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. ²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

If we did not have the Word of God, wouldn't we wonder what is going on in our world? Life, as many of us have known it, is under attack. Over 40 years ago, our nation legalized the killing of babies in the womb. In several states, people have been given the right to end their lives by medical intervention rather than in God's time. The devaluing of the elderly continues to escalate. Marriage has been redefined by the U.S. Supreme Court. The sex one is born with is now up for change rather than being satisfied with the gift of male and female that God clearly bestows on our children.

As God's Word tells us: "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10 ESV).

Thankfully in this verse Jesus unmask for us what is happening. There are two opposing forces in this world:

One is the culture of death and one is the culture of life.

What a contrast is revealed between these two ways of life! The world offers destruction and Jesus offers abundant living. It is becoming more apparent to us all the time that we live on a battlefield, and we need to be equipped for the schemes of the devil.

We must remember that Paul, as he writes under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing to believers in Ephesus; thus, he can exhort them with the action required to stand. The believer has spiritual armor available (Ephesians 6:14-18), but it must be put on.

Before it is put on, we must daily be reminded by the Word of God of our need. We have no strength of our own. Verse 12 of this chapter reveals to us that "*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities ...*".

We are no match for the devil. We need the strength of another.

That is why Paul's exhortation in verse 10 is to "*be strong in the Lord ...*".

Our Lord Jesus Christ disarmed the devil of his victory when He shed His blood for us on the cross. If we focus on ourselves we see sin and failure, but in Jesus there is righteousness and perfection. He is our perfect substitute, so we are strong in Him.

The rest of verse 10 says to be strong "*in the strength of his might.*"

As we think of young people being educated today, we need to help remind them of who they are in Christ. Young people, you will face a very different world than your parents and grandparents faced. You will need to put on your armor because the battle will be fierce.

Then look at the resources we have available. When a nation goes to war, they may get focused on the enemy and forget all the resources they have available for the battle. If you have enough firepower, you need not fear any enemy.

Wow, does the believer have resources! As Lutherans, we refer to them as the "Means of Grace." God didn't write His love and mercy in the sky, but He did choose to communicate it to us through these means. We have the chief means of grace in the Bible, God's holy inerrant Word. In His Word, God detailed for us His plan to save man from sin by sending His only Son into this world. In verse 17 we are reminded that we have "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*"

Because of this, we need to stand up for what God says about life. When assaulted by doubts or mistakes in our past, we stand on the promises of God.

In your past you may have "played around" in the devil's minefield sexually, but if you have repented of your sin, God's Word says that sin is gone. "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

You can stand for life today, even if you have had an abortion. When you bring any sin into the light, Jesus disarms the enemy. The devil can no longer hold that sin over you. Christ is your righteousness, and you stand in Him. God's Word declares it to be so.

Not only has God given His Word, but He has given us two powerful, visible means to remind us that in Christ we are forgiven and new creatures.

When we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, His death became our death to sin. Like little Avery this morning. His death became her death to sin and her promise of eternal life as a child of God. His resurrection also became our resurrection to a new life.

We can only stand by faith in that relationship with Jesus. When you are with others and a life issue comes up, don't fear to speak up for life because Christ lives in you.

Furthermore, God assures us when we come to the Lord's Supper that Jesus gave His righteous, spotless, blameless life for us. His body and blood are offered to us to guarantee us that in Christ our sin is forgiven. We come to the communion table as repentant sinners, confessing no confidence in the flesh but utmost confidence in our Savior who took all that the devil could muster in our place. It is Jesus who stood against every temptation of the devil as He quoted, "*It is written*" (Matthew 4:4a).

So, yes, you are in a battle, but because of your great resources, you can stand as you put on the armor of God.

Secondly, we all need the armor required to stand. There's no need to go and take out a loan to get such armor. It too has been supplied by our Savior, and it is not missing any parts.

We need the "*Whole armor*", the "*full armor*" (Ephesians 6:11 ESV, NASB) and it is repeated in verse 13 for emphasis: "*that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*"

All of the armor is there, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit... go through the Text, it's all there and it's all yours!

Avery received her armor this morning at the font. By God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, her parents will nurture her in the Gospel, bring her to church and teaching her, reading to her, God's Word at home. This will keep her armor shining and in good repair.

You received a set of armor too. Is it shining and in good repair, or is it laying forgotten in a closet gathering dust? Or did you trade it in on some worldly clothes that are more in style?

Think of how vulnerable a soldier is who is missing protective gear. You who are in Christ, put on the armor, take up the armor! Parents, you have an important role to play with your children. You have brought them to the Lord in baptism, but have you taught them how to use the armor they have been given? God's Word is absolute truth. Most of our culture does not believe there is any such thing as absolute truth today. Your children live in a world of relativism...the belief in changeable standards. No belief in good or bad, but values that change from and situation to situation. You as parents are called to teach them what truth is when they hear the news. Teach them how to deal with a suggestive billboard or an advertisement during a television program. Fathers, instruct your boys to turn their eyes away from scantily dressed women and reserve their sensitive minds for the one woman to whom they will vow their life before God. We teach them not to play in the street or to put their fingers in light sockets to keep them from harm...why wouldn't we teach the the truth of God's Word to keep them from eternal harm?

We also must realize this armor comes from God. This armor has been tested. Jesus dealt with the devil for 40 days and nights in the wilderness before He began His public ministry. He dealt with the devil by using the Word of God. "*It is written*" was His main defense.

This is good armor. In the Old Testament, you remember how when David was going to battle Goliath he was offered Saul's armor. David tried it on, but it was untested. He could not go to battle with it. He had to use his sling and stones. Believers, we must use the Word of God as our standard for what God calls good. He created life and called it "*good*," and after He created man, He said it was "*very good*."

Who would have thought that such fundamental issues of life would ever be challenged in our world, but we have God's Word to stand on. And stand we must, for there is a war going on.

The two opposing forces of death and life are very active. Our text says the activity of the devil is described as “*schemes*” (4:11). These are not arbitrary situations that believers face. These are well-calculated schemes. There is thought and planning behind the activity. There is strategy behind the activity.

The devil was a high-ranking angel before his fall. He knows strategy very well, and his schemes are planned. So we must pray against his strategy today. That is the last, but not least, piece of armor that we need to put on.

In our churches, we need to gather to pray against the forces of evil in Jesus’ name. What awesome power we have as believers in Christ. It is available to us by using the armor of God. And let me remind you that our God has not changed, nor has the point of access to His throne changed. His children have direct access through Jesus their Savior.

And lastly, with what attitude should we stand? Ephesians 6:13b tells us: “[*S*]tand firm”! What picture comes to your mind when you think of someone standing firm? Perhaps a Dallas Cowboy lineman? If you watch carefully, they do not stand with feet together but apart, so they can withstand an attack from any direction.

That is what the armor of God does for the believer. It makes him invincible in Christ! The devil cannot overcome the believer. Remember: It is the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ that empowers us. What a blessed place the believer has to stand—in the righteousness of Christ!

So, believer, daily put on the armor that is supplied to you in Jesus. You have no strength of your own, but the Word of God tells you of all the armor that is required to stand—the full armor of God. We stand against the schemes of the devil, and against those schemes we can all stand firm in Christ.

Augustine, when tempted to plunge into the old life, said: “Thou fool, dost not thou know that thou art carrying God around with thee.”

Oh how the believer in Christ needs to remember that Christ lives within. This is no longer my life, it is Christ's. Yes, you live in the midst of a battle between the culture of death and the culture of life. Stand firm in Christ, where the abundant life has always been and always will be!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria-To God alone be the Glory

Edited and revised for use at St Peter Lutheran Church

Original sermon by:

Life Sunday Sermon 2017

Ephesians 6:11 "Here We Stand"

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