

14th SUNDAY OF PENTECOST

August 25, 2024

READING

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

GOSPEL READING

John 6:56-69

[Jesus said,] ⁵⁶“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. ⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.” ⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter

answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

SERMON

Maureen Pump, SAM

What Are You Wearing?

What uniforms have you worn in your life? I’m inviting everyone to wear whatever clothes you wear to work or if you are retired wear whatever it was you wore to work next weekend for Labor Day. Many of us have worn work uniforms. Police uniforms, fatigues if you are in the military, medical scrubs, brown uniforms if you work for UPS, robes, or collars if you are a clergy person. Before my clerical robe I wore a waitress uniform many years ago and as a youth growing up, I wore several different majorette uniforms. Uniforms are clothes we wear for a purpose. In the reading from Ephesians, Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God, so we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Before David went out to do battle with the Philistine Goliath, King Saul made him put on his suit of armor thinking it would give David confidence and protection. David could not walk in the armor because it did not fit him. These clothes were not the clothes God wanted David to wear into battle. David takes the armor off and goes into battle with only his sling shot and defeats the mighty Goliath because once again God in an act of Grace blesses David’s sling shot and empowers him. David did not need special clothes. We don’t find our significance or power in our clothes or uniforms. Our significance and power come when we wear the armor of God. So, what are the pieces of armor we are called to put on?

The Belt of Truth: The belt of truth goes around the waist and holds all the other pieces of armor in place. The belt of truth is the truth found in the Word. The truth of the Word stands against the lies of Satan. The truth that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that all who believe in him will never perish but have eternal life. The truth that Christ is coming again to restore all of creation. The truth that God’s love has set us free from sin and death. Satan will try to convince us that we are lost, and all is hopeless, but we know the truth and wear it at all times.

Breastplate of righteousness: A breastplate covers the heart. The Bible tells us to keep our hearts with all diligence for out of it springs the issues of life. Our righteousness is not found in our own doings, but it is in the righteousness of Christ that protects our hearts. It is

easy in the world we live in to become hard hearted but when we remember that our hearts are protected, and we stay in communion with one another and the Word our hearts remain pure and loving.

Shoes of peace: Our shoes give us a firm foundation and enable us to move quickly and sure footedly. The firm foundation is the gospel message. Christ is the good news of peace. The shoes of peace enable us to remain at peace through our faith in the Prince of Peace and they enable us to move forward sharing the gospel of salvation and peace with others.

The Shield of faith: a shield moves in all directions to offer protection. This world is filled with evil, and it comes in a variety of forms and from a variety of directions. As we battle the forces of evil our shield of faith protects us from Satan's deadliest weapon which is doubt. Satan will try to get us to doubt the promises of Christ, but our shield and strength is our faith.

The helmet of salvation: Satan will target the mind because if Satan can control our thoughts, he can control us. He will feed our mind lies in order to draw us away from Christ. When we keep our thoughts and minds on Christ and our salvation Satan cannot deceive us with his lies.

Take up the sword of the spirit: This is the Word of God. The Word of God, the Bible, is Jesus and it is the weapon we have that cuts through the lies of Satan. When we speak the Word into the lies of Satan, we speak the truth, and it cuts through the lies. The truth is exposed. Satan's deceptions are exposed. Learning the Word and the promises of God in Christ enables us to wield that sword and expose Satan for the liar he is.

Paul then calls us to top it all off with prayer. Always pray. Pray without ceasing. That means to talk to God all day long. Talk to hi as you would a friend because he is your best friend who have given you his best armor.

Davey the shepherd boy defeated the giant Goliath with one stone because he wore armor that was right for him. That armor was faith in God which had been tested and found to be true. What Giants are you facing today? Addiction, divorce, financial problems, relational problems, sickness, grief, discouragement, hopelessness? Are you trying to fight with man-made armor without putting on the full armor of God. The full armor of faith? This is the challenge for the church today. Realize we are indeed in a spiritual battle with Satan. He wants to rob us of our faith in God. Are we dressed in the full armor and ready to stand?

The good news is when clothed in God's armor we will be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might and able to stand against the attacks of the devil and come out victorious!