

**FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church; September 5, 2021**

**PRELUDE:** Ray Holmberg (Osthus singers)

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 146**

*Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. 5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6 the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them--the LORD, who remains faithful forever. 7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, 8 the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. 10 The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD.*

**HYMN #228 (AH) "Father, Again in Jesus' Name We Meet"**

**CONFESSION OF SIN:** *Psalm 51:1-7 Have mercy on me. O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

**PRAYER**

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Isaiah 35:3-6*

*3 Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
4 say to those with fearful hearts,  
"Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you."*

*5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Mark 7:31-37 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man. 33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh*

said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. 36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God's Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of the Father, And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. Amen*

**GLORIA PATRI:** **Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)** *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

**SPECIAL MUSIC:** *In the Image of God* David Reynolds

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**HYMN #260 "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"**

**SERMON TITLE: "PREPARING FOR VICTORY!"**  
**September 5, 2021; Pastor Tom Olson; Ephesians 6:10-20**

WHY? Have you ever wondered why things are so difficult in the world or even in your own life? Have you ever wondered why sometimes when we serve the Lord more completely, life sometimes gets more difficult? The answer is found in this very important portion of the Word of God. We are in an unseen battle fighting against unseen powers. And in order to overcome and succeed we need to heed the instructions of the Apostle Paul and "Prepare for Victory." Let's talk about it.

**I. THE REALITY: WE HAVE A FORMIDABLE ENEMY**

***Ephesians 6:10-20 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.***

**STRATEGY:** What is one thing the devil wants you to forget today? That you are in a spiritual battle in the unseen and seen world. The Apostle Paul finishes his great letter to the Ephesians with this climax to what he has been teaching. There is a great battle going on in the spiritual world and, like it or not, we are participants in it, all day, every day.

OBSERVATION: There are a few statements people have made over the years that I never forget. One was made by Dave Fischer a few years back and it sticks with me. He said something like this, talking about everything he was observing in the world and on the job, ***“I used to try to figure things out until I realized we were in a spiritual battle, then everything started to make sense to me.”*** This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying here. We need to realize that what is happening in the world and in our lives is the result of it being a spiritual battle. That sheds light on it all, doesn't it?

ACTION: So, what is the CALL TO ACTION here? ***Verse 13 “put on the full armor of God so when that evil day of battle comes you can and must stand your ground.”*** I listened to a powerful speech by Pastor Artur Lawowski, the Canadian pastor who is going to jail for “inciting” his congregation to go to church during the lockdowns. He gave a great speech about Martin Luther standing up to the corrupt dictators of his day and reminded us all that when we are asked to disobey God that we must stand our ground in the power of the Holy Spirit no matter what the consequence. We are in a spiritual battle; WE HAVE A FORMIDABLE ENEMY. We can't fight him in our own power. THIS IS THE REALITY we face as we prepare for this spiritual war.

## II. THE PREPARATION: TO BE FOREWARNED IS TO BE FOREARMED

***Ephesians 6:14-18 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.***

Preparation in the military is called, “basic training.” It would be a disaster to send out soldiers without this basic training. And it is a disaster to send out Christians without the basic set of armor we need. Each piece of armor is necessary to overcome the attacks of the evil one. Let's look at them:

1. **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Righteousness has two sides. One is the RIGHT STANDING we have with God through the cross of Christ. And two is the RIGHT LIVING we have as we live according to the world of God. If we don't have Jesus or a holy life, Satan can really mess with us. Habitual sin is like leaving a door wide open in our lives for dark powers to enter.
2. **SHOES OF THE GOSPEL:** the safest place to be is actively telling people about the good news of Jesus, crucified, risen and coming again. A church that is primarily concerned about witnessing to the lost and world missions is a church that is protected by God.
3. **SHIELD OF FAITH:** the first step is to trust Christ for salvation, trust the Father for provision, trust the Holy Spirit for His presence and guidance. The battle is not won with cleverness but it is won with faith.
4. **HELMET OF SALVATION:** Our head needs to be protected. We need a renewed mind to combat the false conversation that goes on in our thinking. The devil accuses us and points out our faults. Christ forgives us and gifts us with Spiritual gifts. Listen to Christ.
5. **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT:** The Bible is the most attacked of all books by Communists and by Secularists of our day. Why? Because it is so powerful. As we learn the Word of God and adjust our lives to it, we are able to cut through the devil's hoards he sends against us. Memorizing and claiming scriptures is the path of victory. ***Hebrews 4:12 “The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.”***
6. **BATTLE PLAN:** Found in verses 14 & 18: STAND FIRM...AND PRAY. Yes, this is the plan for fighting spiritual warfare.

THE PREPARATION is the armor of God. Finally, PREPARING FOR WAR, is preparing for prayer...

### III. THE BATTLE: IT IS FOUGHT ON OUR KNEES

*Ephesians 6:19-20 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

We have already seen that God's battle plan for us is two-fold: STAND and PRAY! In these verses Paul gives us the details for warfare prayer:

1. PRAY FOR THE PROCLAIMERS- for God's Words and fearlessness and clear presentation of the Gospel of Grace.
2. BOLDNESS TO WITNESS: He gives double emphasis of praying for boldness for those who preach and witness for Christ. So many people are ready and waiting to hear the good news of new life in Christ that we need boldness to talk to them.

It is so easy to be fearful and not share the good news of Christ. Last week I visited Gloria Conrad and found out that Pastor Don Richman and his wife, Mavis, live in her same building. So we went to visit them too and had a glorious time together. If you have ever been to a restaurant with Don Richman, you will find out how bold he is as a witness for Christ. By the time you are done eating the waitress will be greeted, engaged in conversation, hear a gospel witness and be invited to consider serving the Lord on a mission trip! And the amazing thing is that the waitresses never seem to mind and in fact are interested! All we need is boldness...we can find 1,000 reasons to not open our mouths with good news. Yet it was someone who was once bold with us!

The battle is FOUGHT ON OUR KNEES. Pray for the ministers of the gospel. Pray for boldness to share the good news of salvation through the blood of Christ. Stand firm, stay in the fight, that is where God wants us, that is why He give us these weapons...for victory! In closing, I would like to read to you a simple list of phrases to say that will assist us in our spiritual warfare with the powers of darkness. It is called "Simple truths to repeat when you're in a spiritual battle."

#### SIMPLE TRUTHS TO REPEAT WHEN YOU ARE IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE:

- The Lord fights for me; Jesus loves me; He is able
- It is finished; His grace is sufficient; Joy comes in the morning
- I am not alone; I am a child of God; I am fearfully and wonderfully made
- Fear has no grip on me; Christ is enough for me; He has overcome the world
- I am a new creation in Christ; Jesus conquered the grave; Sin does not define me, God does
- Be still and know; God is GOOD

Think about these things when we take Holy Communion. **Lead on O King Eternal! Amen**

#### HYMN #451 "Lead On, O King Eternal"

**HOLY COMMUNION (10:30 AM Dave Fischer prep and help)**

**DOXOLOGY: (10:30 AM-To the tune of Edelweiss) *May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.***

**POSTLUDE:** Ray Holmberg

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steady the knees that give way;  
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