

The Whole Armor of God 12 Pentecost B

(Display the knight to everyone). God has equipped His people with some wonderful tools to help us live life as He designed for us. He wants us to be strong, not weak. He has power that we can depend on to help us be strong. The apostle Paul wrote that Christians were in a war of good versus evil. So let's take a look at the "armor" God has made and see what he has prepared for our protection.

The most important thing God has given us is a reminder that we have all we need to fight this battle: "Put on the whole armor of God."

We are familiar with armor on military tanks. These are thick plates of reinforced steel put all around the passenger compartment of a tank to protect soldiers. And though we no longer wear suits of metal, people like police officers must wear body armor to protect against attacks by evil persons. No one in their right mind wants to fight or have a war. Since evil exists in the hearts of men, protection from harm is a must in order to live in safety.

The armor of God is for our spiritual protection because our enemies are not always flesh and blood. We heard that spiritual forces are behind the evil in this world. These evil enemies can be found even, according to St. Paul, in heavenly places. They are everywhere! The present darkness that Paul writes to us about in his letter is to help us understand what we are facing and stand firm in our faith.

So, let's see what else there is to make us strong. (Take out the next sign and put it over the metal knight) The next piece is the belt of truth. Truth is just like a belt, it holds everything up. A tool belt holds up a hammer, screw drivers, a tape measure and other tools needed to complete a job. Truth also helps us measure what is good and guides our footsteps. (Take out the next sign) A breastplate of righteousness is like the body armor that a police officer wears. It deflects or traps objects from causing wounds in vital organs that could be fatal. Spiritually, righteousness keeps us pure in thought and mind. It keeps us from making "fatal" mistakes and guards our heart, which is a symbol of our love for God and one another.

The next piece written about by St Paul is interesting, because it has to do with peace, not with war. Paul writes to Christians to have their shoes ready to tell the gospel story to others. Whatever will help us be ready to share the gospel story might be different for different people. But first we must be strong in the gospel ourselves. This would mean we would need to know what the gospel story tells us.

Take all of these pieces of armor and add to them an insurance policy: a shield of faith, for protection against attacks to any part of one's life and a helmet of salvation to protect your mind from fear and doubt. The only offensive weapon mentioned in Paul's letter...the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God is the final piece. The word of God can protect and guide us in all things, if we keep it close to us. Recently I started volunteering to travel with the Janesville police on a weekly basis to give support when needed. As I ride with police officers, they are constantly alert and looking everywhere. Police must be hyper-vigilant as to any disturbance of the peace. We too should be alert, ready, outfitted for the foul things that lurk and hunt human prey. Prayer is not the least part of our armor and can help us persevere as we stand for God's truth against the forces of darkness that seek to destroy the human soul. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His power! Amen (8 AM - ends)

(9:30 only) At every baptism we are reminded of the reality of spiritual warfare that goes on around us. On page 302 the service includes renunciations of this world and the evil in it. In solidarity I invite us to join with the Kitzman family as they make these renunciations on behalf of Addison just before her baptism. We say them as one body in Christ knowing that we must stand together for the sake of our children and for one another. Amen