Verses: Genesis 1:26-27and Ephesians 6:10-13 Occasion: Worship

Location: First Presbyterian Church of Lake Mary July 26, 2020

Pastor: Joe Raymond

 **Song**

**Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth you have for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unlock and set me free.
Silently now, on bended knee,
ready I wait your will to see;
open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

**Wise Warriors part 1**

Scripture readings**: Genesis 1:26-27 and Ephesians 6:10-13**

**Genesis 1:26-27**

**26 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”**

**27 So God created humankind in his image,
    in the image of God he created them;
    male and female he created them.**

**Ephesians 6:10-13**

**10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 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. 13 Therefore 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.**

**This is the word of the Lord! Thanks be to God.**

**Let us pray**

 Heavenly Father, please quiet our minds and open our hearts

to Your truth,

and please

**…let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
   O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

**Amen**

**Sermon**

Spring 1992: I was at the University of Central Florida with plans to be an Army officer.

I joined the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) for 2 years.

One training we had involved our being left alone in a remote area and instructed to find our way to a rendezvous location. We were supplied very little, but we did receive compasses. This tool was most important.

Why?

The compass told us one truth-the truth we needed most: which way was north!

Using it, we got our bearings and knew the correct way to go even if obstacles stood in the way. Our trainer told us to trust the compass and not our own over-rated and inconsistent sense of direction!

In a way, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was like a compass for these new believers. They lived in a culture of idol worship and witchcraft and they often faced hostile opposition. They needed God’s clear guidance.

Here, as he concluded his letter to them, Paul gave them words of encouragement and prepared them for battle.

He began,

**10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.**

Don’t think of the words “Be strong” as descriptive of the believer.

Rather, they give a directive: “Be made strong.”

Strength is available because God Himself supplies it.

What would the Ephesians need God’s strength for?

It was so they would be…

 **“…able to withstand on that evil day”**

The “evil day” was not one particular day but rather any day on which an evil challenge might come.

Paul was training them to be wise warriors ready for battle because opposition to their faith was all around. Please understand, Paul was not speaking of daily inconveniences they would experience, caused by the forces they could see.

No, he was training them to fight opposition from **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

The Ephesians would have easily understood this because of the occult practices in the city.

Now, we must ask ourselves, “Do these verses have any implications and applications for us in 2020? Do we have “evil days” to withstand? Do we need to be wise warriors?

YES! The **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places** are still the same, but for the most part, believers today are not impressed by this news.

We are not alert to any danger!

Why?

Could it be because:

* We have heard these verses before, and we are bored with them?

OR

* We don’t feel like we understand them, so we just ignore them?

OR

* We are just not sure we believe all that “Satan stuff.”

Let’s stop here for a moment to clarify our thinking.

Let us thoughtfully review the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin, Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day, He arose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

This creed started with the 2 easy words: I believe.

Let me ask you a 2-word question: DO YOU?

Do you BELIEVE what you just recited?

If you answered, “Yes,” then you can understand the lesson today.

If you answered “No,” and you are still unsure about giving up your life to serve Christ, I invite you to come see me at your earliest convenience, so we can have that life and death conversation.

As you recited this creed, you stated the whole gospel message of the Bible.

You can trust this book.

It states plainly that there is a cosmic war raging, and we are participants.

You do not need to believe it, nonetheless, you are in it.

Now you may ask, as all wise warriors must:

* Who exactly are we fighting?
* Why do they want this war?
* Why do they want war with me?

We look to the Bible for answers.

* Who wants war?

Paul teaches in Ephesians 6 that the struggle is against Satan-our adversary, our opposer.

* Why does he want war?
* Why does he want war with me?

As we read today from Genesis 1:**26 …God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness…**

Why is this a reason for war?

* God made man in His own image.
* Satan hates God.
* So, Satan hates you.

You don’t even have to be a believer. If you are human, he hates you.

* It is that simple

What is Satan trying to accomplish in his hatred?

Simply put:

* For the people who are not yet in Christ, he desires to distract them from the gospel and take them to Hell.
* For those who are in Christ, he desires to entice us to sin or to at least keep us so distracted that we do not give God much thought at all. We will be ineffective, and we will not tell others about salvation.

Brothers and sisters, this is far more significant than most people realize!

Satan is not just trying to mess with us, to annoy us, or to inconvenience us in some way. He is not just trying to give us a bad day every now and then.

The war is emphatically not about trivial matters on the earth.

Causing annoyance with trivial matters may be a well-planned scheme that Satan uses to get our eyes off of God, but his motive is much more sinister than we can even perceive.

He is trying to destroy our relationship with God and prevent the spread of the gospel to the unsaved.

Consider Peter’s words in 1 Peter 5:8 **Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.**

Brothers and sisters, please understand, Satan does not need to be dramatic in his attacks, though sometimes he is. His methods of destruction change all the time.

Think of his tactics in Eden. Satan caused Adam and Eve to sin by planting just a seed of doubt. That is all it took.

He does his best to entice us. Sin seems pleasurable at first. We believe we are doing whatever it is because we think it will be good for us, and we drift further away from truth. We are trapped because we forget what we learned in basic training:

Satan is a liar. Sin is never good for us.

Paul wrote this warning to the Hebrews in chapter 1.

2 **Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.**

Be wise warriors! Know your enemy, know his tactics, pay attention!

Parents, grandparents, and guardians, it is especially important for us to be on high alert to the wiles of our enemy! You had better believe he has his sights on our families!

This may all seem like scary news now, but it is in the Bible for our protection.

Though we have a foe for whom we are no match, believers need not fear.

We have protection from his schemes and strength from God Himself!

Next week we will examine the armor He has provided to enable us to confidently stand our ground.

I encourage you to read ahead in Ephesians 6.

Remember, as 1 John 4:4b teaches believers:

**…the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**

Church, this is truly good news! Please remember: this good news, this gospel, came to you on its way out to someone else, using YOU as a messenger.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

We are prone to distraction and so busy with worldly cares that we sometimes fail to stay alert to the wiles of our enemy as we should. We pray that the Holy Spirit would enable us to pay greater attention, so we do not drift from Your teaching. Please strengthen us with Your power. In Jesus’s name we ask these things.

Amen!

And now:

 “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ… the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14) Go in Peace!