

*Ephesians 6:10-20*  
*“Armed for Battle”*  
*Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

*September 2, 2018*  
*First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.*  
*Pastor Peter Adelsen*

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

*[Practice]*

When I was in high school, I ran on the cross country and track teams. Even though I didn't always want to be at practice, I knew that each practice was important. Without practice, I wouldn't be prepared for the race that mattered.

Without practice, I would run slower. And at cross country race days, the practice lap around the course prepares the runners about the course – like when it's safe to run faster verses keeping a steady pace – and to know what to be prepared for, like a stream or a tree root.

The same goes with those involved in football, basketball, volleyball, or even drama club. Without practice, you wouldn't be prepared.

You wouldn't know where the coach wants you to be on the field or court. You wouldn't know your lines at the play or musical.

And for those in school, practice helps us with math equations and how to diagram a sentence.

*[Training]*

As Christians, we are to show up to practice by reading and taking to heart God's Written Word in His Scriptures, receiving God's forgiveness in the Divine Service and participating in Bible studies.

Through being immersed in God's Word, we are better prepared for whatever the devil throws at us in our daily lives. For as Deuteronomy 4:9 says, ***“Make [God's Word] known to your children and your children's children.”***

God says this, so future generations would be prepared.

You see, this is the responsibility of all parents to train, or coach, their children in obedience to God.

Proverbs 22:6 says:

***“Train up a child in the way he should go;  
even when he is old he will not depart from it.”***

You see, training is important. Practice is important. For without training and practice, we are lost and we do not know where we are ought to go. We can't remember our course. We can't figure out the play. We can't remember our lines.

As Christians, we began our training when we were baptized with the water and the Word. At that moment, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit cloaked us with Christ's protection – we received the Armor of God.

This armor was given to us to protect us from Satan's evil cosmic powers and against the spiritual forces of evil.

But, what are we to do with this armor? Could we ever lose this armor?

Let's first tackle the first question – what are we to do with this armor?

Well, we are to be educated in God's Word. So, through education and following God's Word, we are wearing the full armor of God. We are prepared.

But, could we ever lose this armor?

Sadly, yes. So, when you don't believe God's Word is sacred – is true – you are taking off God's armor piece by piece. This is your own doing. This is your own choice, because Jesus freely gave you His armor.

Christ gave us His armor at our baptism that He wore to battle against Satan. And, His armor that He gave us is this:

- The belt of truth.
- The breastplate of righteousness.
- The shoes of the gospel of peace.
- The shield of faith.
- The helmet of salvation.
- The sword of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ freely gave you His armor to protect you when you were baptized into His death and resurrection. He reminds you that you are indeed protected from the evil foe when we begin each Divine Service when the pastor says, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Now, even when we are wearing the Armor of God, Satan is continuously trying to pummel us, because Satan cannot admit defeat.

You see, Satan continues to throw flaming darts at us in hopes that we would give up. He wants us to set down our armor and follow the world. He wants us to follow his lies, rather than God’s truth.

The devil relentlessly baits and badgers us on all sides. His purpose is to make us scorn and despise the Word of God and Works of God, to tear us away from faith, and to draw us into disbelief and denial of God and drive us into countless sins.

Through Satan’s fall, he has become so completely perverted that he loves sin for its own sake. He likes to do what is wicked just because it is wicked.

In a sermon in 1532, Martin Luther wrote:

“The wickedness of the devil is so great that no man can grasp it, nor is it possible for any human being to be so wicked in his own nature. For although a man is very wicked and intensely angry and does his very worst... He stops.”<sup>1</sup>

But, the devil is so wicked that he finds pleasure and delight only in the misfortune of other people.<sup>2</sup>

### ***[Mr. Bedloe]***

Many of you may be familiar with the situation comedy “Petticoat Junction,” which ran on television from 1963 to 1970.

One man on that show kept showing up at the most inopportune time. This man was Mr. Homer Bedloe. You see, Mr. Bedloe was the vice president of the C&FW Railroad, which runs the Hooterville Cannonball train that connects Hooterville to Pixley. You’d think he would celebrate his train routes, but he doesn’t.

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<sup>1</sup> What Luther Says: 1156, p. 394

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 394.

Over and over again he shows up trying to shut down this route. He tries scheme after scheme and each time he believes he will succeed. He uses lies and charm to gain the people of Hooterville as friends, but each time he stabs them in the back.

In one such episode, the train engineers inform Mr. Bedloe that the train will be on time in the morning. Bedloe responds, “Oh no! Take your time. Be late! I don’t mind.”

“Here that Charlie, we can sleep late!”

“Floyd, we’ve got to get up early to clean the train. It’s a mess!”

Bedloe responds, “Oh, no, no, no. You shouldn’t waste a good Saturday morning cleaning a train... The messier it looks, the better!”<sup>3</sup>

You see, Bedloe knew that some other train executives were going to be on that train that next day. He wanted them to see a filthy train, so they would go on his side to shut down the train service.

Bedloe here is using a scheme similar to Satan. He wants the people to be unprepared, so he can destroy them.

*[Satan desires we take off God’s Armor]*

For it is the devil and our sinful desire that defiles us, as Christ says in today’s Gospel lesson.

Jesus said, ***“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him... For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a person”*** (Mark 7:15, 21-23).

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<sup>3</sup> “Petticoat Junction,” Season 1, Episode 10.

These are just some of the flaming darts that Satan sends at us. He wants us to take off the Armor of God so we would follow him. He makes it appear easier to live making yourself the focus of attention, rather than God. He makes it appear easier to live marginalizing God's rule and reign by doing whatever we want.

But, when you take off the Armor of God and live in the way of unrepentant sin, you are putting yourself in grave danger of exclusion from God's gracious reign and rule. For unrepentant persistence eventually leads to complete separation from God. For each time we sin, we are putting more space between yourself and God.

You see, Satan wants us to be comfortable in our sin – like Mr. Bedloe – so he can blame us when he leads us astray. Even though, he caused the conflict in the first place.

But, thanks be to God that there is forgiveness and this gives us encouragement! Jesus here does not merely condemn sinners, but He also sets us free. We are liberated from sin when we confess our sins to God our Father and in return, we are forgiven. We are set free from sin through Christ's death and resurrection, which alone reconciles us to God.

### ***[Put on God's Armor]***

Throughout today's epistle, the Apostle Paul exposes the demonic forces that battle against us, and he encourages us with the divine weapons that protect us. Paul speaks to us like a general encouraging his troops for battle.

In today's world, when we have problems, we typically try to solve them in purely human terms. We may use our logic, or we may buy a self-help book, but the Lord often gives us the answer we need in His Written Word. He reminds us that we are indeed wearing spiritual armor that protects us from the evil one.

You see, God knows our danger and need. He knows the constant and furious attacks and assaults of the devil. Therefore, He wishes to warn, equip, and protect us against them with His armor against their flaming arrows, which is the good antidote against their evil infection and poison.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kolb-Wengert, *The Book of Concord: The Lutheran Confessions*, The Large Catechism, 382-14.

Since God knows our danger, He strengthens our armor each time we read and inwardly digest His Holy Word. He strengthens our armor each time we remember our baptism. He strengthens our armor each time we receive forgiveness of our sins. He strengthens our armor each time we receive Christ's true body and true blood, which forgives our sins and strengthens our faith.

So, remember to put on the full Armor of God by remaining faithful to Jesus Christ.

For God is the true warrior, not us. We may be His troops, but we cannot conquer Satan by our own strength.

Remember, as long as we put on the full Armor of God, we have nothing to fear, but we receive only comfort, because Christ has already given us the victory over Satan and his evil minions through His death, resurrection and ascension back into heaven where Christ lives and reigns until He returns.

Through Christ's victory, we are well protected against the enemy's assaults when we wear our baptismal armor of Christ.

Like the Ephesians Paul wrote to, we are to be prepared for battle. We, too, are baptized into Christ and are warriors. We are warriors who must always be armed with God's weapons and God's armor, which is God's truth – because we are always on the field of battle using God's Word as our defense.

God's truth is our only defense against Satan's lies.

But, we know the end. Satan loses. God wins. For the strife is over, for all of us in Christ.

In Christ, we are chosen to be holy, faithful, and blameless just like Christ before God the Father.

In Christ, our old, corrupt man has been clothed with the new man, re-created in God's image and with His righteousness.

In Christ, we are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection for which we receive forgiveness of sins.

In Christ, we share in His eternal inheritance – life everlasting.

In Christ, we receive salvation through His grace.

So, through Christ, we stand firm against the evil forces, because we are protected and comforted by His Armor, which gives us peace. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠