

A Sermon by Joe Klenzmann, Diaconal Intern, Postulant for Holy Orders
Church of the Holy Comforter
August 23, 2015

Be Prepared

May the word of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in the sight of God, our strength and our redeemer? Amen

Today we heard one of my favorite epistles; “Put on the armor of God”. That is a very powerful image, the knight in shining armor.

“Be strong in the Lord and of his power”

These verses are a battle cry to the Ephesians to put on the armor of God, that God will protect them. A Battle cry makes sense as a metaphor because Paul was most likely in prison in Rome, wherever Paul traveled in those days he would see Roman soldiers ruling over occupied lands and peoples.

Paul realized that the people he was writing too knew well the struggles of flesh and blood, government persecution and natural or cosmic events. These are everyday problems in 60 AD. Paul wanted them to know more; that they needed to be protected from the evils of the world; and in the world.

This passage is at the end of Paul’s letter and it contains two parts.

- The first section is a call to put on the armor of god.
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- the belt of truth,
- the breastplate of righteousness,
- the shoes of the Gospel of peace,
- the shield of faith,
- the helmet of salvation;

These are all defensive objects, all designed to protect.

Paul’s message to the Ephesians and to all the people of that time.

“Is be prepared”

Be prepared for the bad things that might happen in your life. Be prepared for the bad things that may happen in your world. Finally, he asks that they pray constantly for others and for Paul.

Paul asks them to “Pray 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... and that I may declare it boldly”. That is a great prayer for any preacher.

The people of 60 AD had a very different view of Evil than we do today. Everything bad in their lives was due to Satan or evil. If it rained too much, if it rained too little, it was Satan’s doing. That is where they were wrong, not every event was caused by evil.

We do not think that way today, Satan and evil are no longer considered the cause for all our problems. In fact if I went around blaming Satan for all of my misfortunes people would think I was crazy. The term Evil is used infrequently and limited to specific, individual heinous acts.

Or some to label whatever or however they disagree with over use the term. As an example, you might hear one of today's political pundits say so and so is evil, or the evil empire.

Today we attribute terrorism, war, poverty, natural disasters, as things that cut us deeply and that we are vulnerable and helpless to prevent, we have become a nation of victims. We do not imagine there is a little red man with a pitchfork, horns and a tail hiding behind every tree to mess with our lives.

But sometimes, I feel like throwing my hands up into the air and saying, there is nothing I can do, I give up, there is too many bad things happening. I AM DONE.

Today we attribute fear, anger, greed, jealousy violence, disease, dishonesty, pride, ego, prejudice, and hate as just human nature, just the way it is.

That is where we are wrong. Those things are evil, manmade events that can crush you, but they are evil.

Just as it was in 60 AD, sometime bad things happen to good people.

It is true, if all the people in the world were good upstanding people where no one did anything wrong, earthquakes, and tornadoes would still devastate the land.

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I mentioned the knight in shining armor and that it is a good image, but the more I think about it my armor is not so shiny, in fact, there are a lot of dents, scorch marks, scratches, and mud. There are a few gaps in my armor and this makes me slightly vulnerable. But this armor has kept me alive, to fight another day, and it will protect you as well.

I would ask you to do two things this week,

1. If there is someone in your life who's armor is weak, use your shield of faith to protect them.
2. Do as Paul asked, pray not for your selves but pray for the world, for peace, for justice, for good leadership.

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the protection we need to walk safely through our daily life. Help us to make sure we always put on the full armor you have provided.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.