

Midweek Lenten Worship & Sermon, 3.18.20

Series: The Son of God Goes Forth to War

Theme:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus. I am glad that you spending time in prayer and meditation on God's Word. Our theme for this evening is "Knowing the enemy." There are powers of darkness at work in this world, but God gives us hope and help in his Son. God bless your time together in his Word: We begin...

M: In the name of our God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hidden. Amen.

C: O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy, and in your faithfulness, come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God.

Silence for private confession.

M: Jesus says to his people: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven." His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?

M: Believing the promise of our Savior Jesus, I forgive you all your sins. Be assured that you are a dear child of God and an heir of eternal life.

A Prayer:

Lord God Almighty, our mighty Rock of salvation, give us such strength of faith that we may cling to you in every trouble and, armed with your strong Word, be preserved from every assault of Satan and his forces of evil; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sermon Text: Ephesians 6:12

The Sermon: Know Your Enemy, Know It is not Hopeless

One of the great concerns about the Coronavirus is that health officials are telling us it can go undetected in a large percentage of people. People can be carrying it for days or weeks without even knowing it. We know the virus is lurking out there, but we are somewhat "in the dark" when it comes to who has it and who doesn't. It leaves us concerned; it might leave us feeling a little helpless.

Today the Apostle Paul reminds us that there is a SOMEONE out there lurking in the darkness, an enemy that is far worse than the Coronavirus. This enemy is invisible and he is evil. Thankfully we know, we have a report on our enemy in God's Word. It is also good know we are not helpless and without hope.

Paul tells his readers, "*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*" (Ephesians 6:12).

Paul says our battle is "against rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world." The evil angels, headed up by the chief fall angel are organized in a military fashion. They are constantly, daily marching out in the world to try and undo all the good things God's good angels are doing. Where God's angels are always ministering for good, these angels are constantly to bring evil and darkness.

In today's terms that would mean that these demons of darkness are trying to smother our hope in the face of a pandemic. They are trying to convince us that all is lost and that Jesus has left the scene and left us to fend for ourselves, we shouldn't trust him and his Word.

The goal of all demons is to get us to leave our faith, to set down the sword of the Spirit, God's Word. They want to separate you from God's Word. This picture of a struggle with dark forces of evil can be startling to us. It means that our dark world is not a static thing. It is not like your bedroom that sits in darkness until you turn on the light. Scripture says our enemy is like a lion on the prowl. This is an active darkness that is around us. This darkness

seeps out of one dark room and tries to fill another and another and another.

Especially in our world today, where so many may be feeling lonely and hopeless and smothered by the darkness. We need to let them know there is hope with Jesus, the light of the world. We need to pray for them.

We need to watch ourselves first, that we don't get smothered by the darkness. If we are afraid there is misinformation out there in the news media today, our enemy, the devil is the "Father of lies," (Jn 8:44) says Jesus. This is his native language and he has had thousands of years of practice at it.

And he would like to use his lies to bring us into a dark place, a place with no hope. He uses his two favorite lies. 1. First, he tells you that you are such a good person and that you don't need Jesus because God would never condemn you to hell. 2. His second lie is the opposite, but just as effective. He tells you that the things you have done are so bad, God can't forgive you. Both are lies. He wants you to believe that God is not fair and doesn't care about you and me. He wants to smother you in a darkness where you are angry with God or question whether God is with us. He wants us to abandon God's Word that tells us that he is working good for us. He wants us ultimately to be left in a place like he is, hating God, spiritually dark and dead.

God's report to you is, his Son went forth to war against this enemy and he overcame the enemy. It is good to know our enemy and his tactics of lying, it is even better to know it is not hopeless. Our Savior won the war!

"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:4,5). That light pushes out the darkness that Satan tries to use to smother hope. The light of Jesus gives you hope, hope in a future place where there is no more illness, no more viruses.

"Darkness has not overcome it." John says. Jesus' whole ministry was a battle against darkness. And he won. He won with God's Word, he won with his power that would undo the darkness, drive out demons and sickness. He was showing that he undoes all the darkness that Satan brings into this world.

We might say, "Where is he today? When will he undo this virus?" Where is Jesus? Look no further than the cross. There on the cross, we see the ultimate act of evil turned into good. Satan thought he had conquered, darkness would rule forever. Of course, he had lost. He was defeated. Jesus rose from the dead. Death, our greatest enemy, was defeated.

Thank God, that through faith in Jesus we see Jesus for who he really is. He is our loving Savior who brings forgiveness and light and life and hope to all who believe in him. "In him is life, and that life is the light of all mankind." (John 1:4).

That light of Jesus means we can be totally honest with ourselves and admit the mess in our life. We see what sin really is and how much damage it does to me and others. We see why God hates sin so much and that it deserves condemnation. We take it to Jesus, every last thought, word and deed and we trust that he is our good and merciful Savior and by the cross we are forgiven.

God's report on our enemy tells us he is a liar who wants to take away all hope and have us live in darkness. With Jesus we see we are not hopeless and we live in the light. That means our life has a grand purpose: Gratitude for God's Grace! We live not for our own glory, but for his! We look at our family members as precious souls, souls that are in a battle too and we encourage them to see Jesus because we want to live forever with them! We look to our fellow believers and pray for them during this time of uncertainty. We are thankful for their prayers and encouragement for one another. For their service to their neighbor.

And because of Jesus, I can see through viruses, through death itself, into eternity, where there is a real place alongside millions of fellow believers like my family and all of you, where we'll be with Jesus forever in a life filled with so much wonder and beauty and joy and love and action that is far more than we can imagine. Amen.

Closing Prayer¹:

I need thy presence ev'ry passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.

Further Reading:

- Read Psalm 18 – The Lord Delivers, He is our Help
- Read the Passion History: Matthew 26:57-75

¹ *Abide with Me*, Christian Worship 588, v. 5+6