**Armor of God = Christ!**

**Ephesians 6:10-17**

Trinity XXI – 11.06.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Did you pay full and close attention to our Epistle lesson? God’s Spirit moved Paul to pen these words:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

This passage about the armor of God begins by explaining that we need this armor to stand against Satan’s schemes. We are contending, or, as our text says, “wrestling with things other than flesh and blood – something other than men. We are at war against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. We are at war with things that God is at war with – it is a spiritual battle between God and the forces of Satan. It is a struggle that has eternal consequences.

I know your battle. I know your struggle. It is the terrible conflict I am enduring. I know how well I am succeeding. I fail each day, as do you. Trying to do it by ourself – in our own flesh – we fail, falling into sin.

God’s name slips out of your mouth in a manner that is neither prayer, nor praise, nor thanksgiving.

Your daily prayers and devotional life are not at all like you would desire it to be. You know what to do, you complain that you don’t do it, make promises to do better, it gets better for a bit, but then you fall into that same old rut.

You complain about Melvin Milkowitz, especially when you cannot turn on the TV without seeing one of his ads running for Senate.

Many of our neighbors have already decided that what Scripture declares about certain issues is incorrect, and that God has leapt with us into the 21st Century thinking. This is the lie Satan is using to convince us that we too should go along these false teachings, that we also should join in their worship of the creature (man’s ideas) rather than the creator.

Do you truly understand the severity of the struggle? Do you comprehend the peril that is lurking if you lose the struggle? Do you fully appreciate the eternal consequences of losing this battle?

You know the repentant thief on the cross next to Jesus, to whom Jesus declared, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”? Well, there is someplace other than paradise. On the last day, those who reside in that place of eternity will be raised – and in their perfected flesh will be sent to endure torment for eternity.

This is why Paul, inspired of God, wrote: *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*  *Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

Do you understand this? You are strong – ***IN THE LORD*** in the ***Strength of HIS might.*** We already know we cannot stand on our own.

What is the Word of God? I'm guessing your response is, the Bible. The Scriptures are indeed the inspired and inerrant word of God. That is the first thing we think of, but that is woefully incomplete.

Such in an inferior understanding of the phrase “the Word of God.”

Using those same scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we will come to a deeper and more Godly understanding.

John's gospel will clean things up for us. In Genesis you already heard what will be easily familiar from John's Gospel, the first few verses.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:1-3, 14)

Knowing this, who said, “let there be light?”

Who said, “let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear?”

It was the Word of God which spoke everything into existence. It was this word of God which took on human flesh. The Word of God lived without sin even as He endured the temptations of Satan. The Word of God died on the cross to free us from sin, burying our sinfulness in His tomb. It was for the Father’s glory that He raised the Word of God who on the third day.

The Word of God is the second person of the Trinity. God’s Christ is the Word of God.

Now you can look rightly at the Armor of God. What is the belt of Truth? Christ!

He alone is Truth – the Way, the Truth, and the Life – no one comes to the Father except through Him.

What is the breastplate of righteousness? Christ! There is none other who is righteous. You are robed in Christ’s righteousness through baptism, He guards your heart and mind.

What are the shoes for your feet, the readiness of the gospel of peace? Christ! Earlier in Ephesians you learn that you are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them – like shoes that walk your feet.

What is the shield of faith which extinguishes the flaming darts of the evil one? Christ! The shield of faith.

Many people believe that the shield is their faith. They like to point at their own faith, as something they do. I've watched too many people trust “their faith,” only to have faith falter and fail.

The shield of faith is not the faith itself, but what faith trusts. What does true faith trust? What is it that shields us? Christ!

What is the helmet of salvation? Christ! You know this because you hear it right after every sermon – from Philippians. *The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:7) Christ guards your mind, just like a helmet – even as He is the breastplate protecting your heart.

Finally, what is the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God? Now that which was first comes into play. John Gospel answered this for us – Christ!

A sword is predominantly an offensive weapon. Who is it that defeated Satan? Who is it that crushed His head? Christ, the very Word of God which became flesh. As that beloved hymn declares, Christ is the little word that fells Satan.

Now knowing what the armor God is, where do you take it up? Where do you go to be prepared to withstand the evil day? And know that the evil days is every day you walk in this flesh. For each and every day you are in mortal combat, tempted to fall away and trust something other than Christ.

You are to stand firm – that means to the last – until Christ returns.

Christ is both the author and perfecter of your faith. You were robed with Christ in your baptism.

You continually have your robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb when you hear his forgiveness proclaimed into your ears.

Your robes are washed clean in the blood of the Lamb as you eat His very flesh pierced for you, and when you drink His very blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Have you figured out yet where you take up the whole armor of God? You are in the Lord’s armory. The armor of God is being place upon you as you listen. Right here! Right now! In this place! This is where Christ prepares to go out into the world.

For 3 weeks you heard what takes place in this Divine Service. In it, God prepares you to go out in the world. God arms you for combat, protecting you for your struggle not just against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil, so that you might overcome until the last day.

How many of you would leave your homes naked to go to work, to go golfing, to do anything? You wouldn't, would you!

Do not go off to daily spiritual combat in your own flesh. Come regularly and take up the whole armor of God, be clothed in Christ for your daily struggle – your daily walk of faith.

Christ meets you here with His forgiveness for your foolish thinking you can stand against the evil foe. He grants you new life, clothing you with Himself. He's the victorious One, your Champion. He is your armor! The armor of God – Christ Jesus your Lord! Amen.