

Sermon: “Know Your Enemy” Sermon Text: Ephesians 6:12 Lent 4 March 22, 2020

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God’s grace and peace are yours through Jesus Christ, who will bring us through the roughest of times. Amen.

God gives us hope through His words in Ephesians 6:12

These are the words of our God. Amen.

Dear Christians in the shelter of the Lord,

As we begin to feel the increasing effects of the Coronavirus with some people becoming extremely ill, with more and more public places closing so people feel alone, and with a growing number of people unemployed, we may feel that evil has won. Jesus said, *“In the world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world”* (John 16: 33). Paul wrote that our troubles in life are outward signs of a spiritual battle. The devil is behind the problems of this world. God’s Word warns what we can expect in our battle against him. Today, we’ll view God’s reconnaissance report to **Know Our Enemy!**

First, we face the ruler of darkness. Covid-19 is physical so we can do certain things to avoid it or at least defend against it. But Paul described unseen attackers: *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the ... spiritual forces of evil”* (Ephesians 6:12). Paul urges us as Christians to prepare with God’s armor, especially to have His Word, because if we lose this battle, it will result in eternal death.

Our enemies are the devil and his evil angels. They have been condemned, but their goal is to take you, me, and everyone else to suffer in hell with them. Paul’s references to rulers, authorities, and powers indicate that the evil angels are organized to carry out the work of harming us. They promote spiritual darkness that can smother our souls in sin like a heavy fire blanket smothers a fire.

Ideally, the demons want to prevent unbelievers from ever hearing of God’s grace in Christ. Outwardly people may seem to be good, but inside they are spiritually dead. They have no true love for God or a desire to serve Him. Satan is waging war to separate all people from God. God’s Word warns, *“Be alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8). The devil seeks to keep us from God by separating us from other Christians and from His Word.

Normally, our lives are calm and orderly without traumatic events like we are experiencing now. But, now we see that the powers of darkness are not harmless. Spiritual darkness is sneaking about like lions seeking how to devour those with faith. We may have friends or family who are victims to the power of darkness. It’s time for us to get serious about this battle. Pray for them! Talk about what they are missing by living in their sin without repentance and by rejecting Jesus as their Savior. Speak the truth in love!

Second, we are battling a liar. When people have lied to us we’ve learned to be careful to accept what they say. It’s sad that those who are not honest can’t be trusted. Jesus told the Jewish people who hated him that they had the wrong guide: *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.... He is ... the father of lies”* (John 8:44). Like the Jews, many people today don’t believe God’s truth. They would rather believe a lie that excuses their sins. This is Satan’s trick to keep us eternally lost.

Satan’s native language is lying. He is so good at lying that he can take some of the worst sins, like adultery or murder, and make them seem good no matter how many people are hurt or families are destroyed. The devil is jealous of what God offers us through Jesus: forgiveness of sins, peace in times of trouble, and joy during the toughest of times. The devil works hardest to get us to doubt God’s Word. He tries to keep us from reading or studying it. He knows that it is the power of God for salvation when we believe it. God wants everyone to know and benefit! That’s why Jesus tells us to study His Word as a check against the devil’s lies.

The devil has two effective lies. First, he tells us that if we sin it's okay with God. He won't condemn us. The second lie is the opposite. He tells us that we are so bad that not even God wants to save us. Both are wrong. God does not excuse our sin. He will punish it no matter who commits it. But also, when we are sorry for our sins and seek His forgiveness, God in Christ will forgive us and help us to do what is right and pleasing to Him. That's why God sent His Son to go forth to war to pay for our sins in full! In Him we have hope!

Third, God has given us light in dark times. Even a small candle drives away the darkness in a huge cave. More importantly in our troubling times, a powerful light shines for our lives! That light has pushed out the darkness of Satan's control. *"Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free'"* (John 8:31-32). The light of God's Word has given us faith and the certain hope of heaven even in this time of darkness. John wrote about Jesus, *"In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:4, 5).

Our hero, Jesus, fought against our enemy, Satan. Often, Jesus used his Word to defeat him. Sometimes he used miracles to undo the damage that Satan caused. But Jesus' greatest weapon was the cross. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross. But, Jesus used the cross to defeat the power of the devil, our diseased world, our sinful nature, and death. Paul wrote, *"Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"* (Colossians 2:15). Thank God that we have Jesus! Through faith in Him as our Savior we have forgiveness and eternal life. Whatever problems of evil and the effects of this virus that we experience in this time of trial, we know that Jesus lived and died to put an end to all of it. It's only a matter of time before He returns and makes all things right. Even now Jesus reigns over heaven and earth with *all authority* (Matthew 28:18). He will allow evil or problems to go only so far and then He will rescue us. The more we study the Bible the more we see that evil is always overcome by God. In the end, Jesus' Word succeeds. The Bible urges us to go to our almighty God in prayer through Jesus our Savior. God does not lie. He promised, *"Call on me in the day of distress. I will deliver you, and you will honor me"* (Psalm 50:15).

Last Sunday we read about Jesus healing a man who had been born blind. After Jesus had healed him, even under fierce questioning by Jews who hated Jesus, he kept saying: *"One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"* (John 9:25). As wonderful as sight is, to come out of spiritual blindness into God's light is infinitely better. It means that we can be honest and admit the sins of doubt and fear instead of trusting God. We see that our sins harm others and our relationship with God. We see that God hates sin because it leads people into hell. As believers we confess our sins to the Lord and are confident that He will forgive every evil thought, word, and action! Jesus has taken away our sins with His own life! He has let us see our God who loves us.

Love is powerful. When we see the love of Christ who died for us, it makes us want to live for Him! We love our family not only because of the blood-line, but because they are blood-bought souls with whom we want to live forever! As we live in the light of Jesus, whatever we can do to help them know and grow in Him is our goal. Because of Jesus, we see that problems in life, like this virus, are real, but then we see beyond this life to eternity. Heaven is a real place with millions of believers gathered together with nothing to separate them. We'll be with Jesus forever with a life filled with light, beauty, joy and love that is beyond our wildest dreams. This is the victory that Christ our warrior has won for us. What amazing grace God has shown to us in Christ! Amen.