

It is interesting after last week's message where the young boy David could not go and face Goliath wearing the king's armor, that here in Ephesians, Paul uses the metaphor of putting on armor. In this passage we will look at what *the full armor of God* meant back then and what metaphors might work for us today. Paul writing to the church at Ephesus would have known that there was a garrison of Roman soldiers stationed there and they would have been constant reminders day and night dressed in their armor, ready for any battle or uprising. It might have been natural to think of God's powerful strength while watching the troops dressed for battle march about the city and countryside.

So, let's look at the descriptions of the armor and its parts, *pick up the full armor of God so that you can stand your ground.* (Ephesians 6:11) Taking up the armor was the call to arms like when a fire alarm goes off which calls all the fire fighters to swing into action and quickly don their gear to go battle a blaze. The call is to be ready, to be proactive. For us today and this time of year it might be to put on a jacket or a raincoat. In the winter it would be to put on a heavy overcoat and boots. As Christians I believe we are to put on Christ - his teaching and his example. What do you wear that reminds you of Christ? I wear a variety of crosses. But Jesus had a different symbol or metaphor he talked about. He said *Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.* (Matthew 11:29-30)

In the rest of this passage the reader sees that in each piece of the armor there is an example of the faith that we are to put on and carry with us daily. Paul wrote of wearing *the belt of truth around your waist.* I first thought of a belt like we all wear (unless we have suspenders and that might be a different metaphor!) My belt of truth is that my old waist is not the same size as my old belts. It might be that the belt has shrunk! Truth is I have not only put on Christ, I have put on weight. But then I thought it might be a better thought of the other belt we wear - the protective one - the seat belt! We are safe and secure. Paul put it this way in Romans, *If God is for us who can be against us?* God's got you covered.

The armor outfit description continues with, *justice as your breastplate.* The breastplate would be there to protect the heart and torso much like a bullet proof vest or a flak jacket today. I do not have to dodge too many bullets but as a pastor and a Christian I do get some flak. Don't you? Having justice as your flak jacket may help you endure whatever is hurled your way or tries to break your heart. Compassionate justice will keep you strong and focused on making things right.

A famous breastplate is one worn by St. Patrick with this inscription:
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. Amen.

Wearing *shoes on your feet so that you are ready to spread the good news of peace* was next. In reality they would have been sandals back in the day. Jesus taught his followers before sending them out to spread the good news, *Wherever they don't welcome you, as you leave that city, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them.* (Luke 9.5) They were ready to go anywhere and share the Good News. Think of that the next time you slip on or tie on your shoes.

Wear *the shield of faith so that you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one.* About the only shield I have like that is the umbrella I carry religiously in these rainy days! But if you think about it the other protective shield we have is prayer. We cover one another in prayer. The head is covered with *the helmet of salvation* that reminds me of my football and army days. I no longer wear helmets, but I do wear a cap or hat at times. If the sun ever comes back out we might wear sun block to save us from the UV rays. As Christians may we also wear our thinking caps and have the head knowledge to know and understand our faith. Remember that. Use your thinking cap.

Lastly, we are to take up *the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.* I proposed to people this week in conversations that this was the only offensive weapon I saw in the full armor. All the rest were defensive or protective. The sword here is God's word or for us the Bible. Now I do not think the Bible as offensive, though some dis-believers apparently do. Nor do I use it offensively as some do, using it to beat others over the head with it by quoting chapters and verses to get a conviction and a conversion as if by force. Someone pointed out to me that the sword is also defensive, when it is used to stop or deflect another's sword attack upon you. Take your Bible with you. Don't just beat people with it, read it. Read this letter to the Ephesians. Come and join us for one of the Bible studies of the letter of James. As you put on whatever you put on this week, put on Christ. Keep the faith. Alleluia and Amen.

Going out in the World

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 6/11/24

Going out in the world,
Be sure you are ready.
No matter what is hurled,
May your faith hold steady.
Refrain:
For the Lord gives the strength,
That we need day by day.
So, hold fast to your faith,
Christ's with you, come what may.

To the Lord always pray,
There's no need to be scared.
Christ will show you the way,
And help you be prepared.
Refrain:

You are covered in prayer,
Go and offer God's grace,
And the peace of Christ,
Everywhere, every place.
Refrain: