

Armor Up with Justice and Righteousness June 14, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Letter to the Ephesians:

This week, the scripture focus is found in the Letter to the Ephesians. This letter was written by Paul to the church and surrounding people of Ephesus sometime around 60 A.D. Paul wrote this letter from jail, and probably wrote the letter to the Colossians about this same time. Paul's ministry at Ephesus totaled about 3 years, so he was very knowledgeable about their needs and issues. Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor having a harbor that opened into the Cayster River. That river emptied into the Aegean Sea making accessible by ship very easy. Consequently, the city was an intersection of major trade routes, and a strong commercial center. It boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana, or Artemis in Greek, which served the fertility religion of its time. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2) and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NRSV) Scripture theme for series

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes

for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ With all of these, ^[b] take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

1 Samuel 17 Focal Story

1 Samuel 17:19-21

¹⁹ Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. ²⁰ David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army.

1 Samuel 17:31-50

³¹ When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. ³² David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!" ³⁸ Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So, David removed them. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine. ⁴¹ The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field." ⁴⁵ But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you

down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

⁴⁸ When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. ⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from these passages?

What do you think about as you read about David and Goliath?

Why do you think David did not want King Saul's armor?

How are God's armor and David's armor alike?

What lessons do you find in that story?

What two things gave David the victory?

So, bottom line, what do you get out of these passages?

Commentary:

Since the writing of this passage by the mind of Paul, a lot has changed in our knowledge and understanding about the universe and science. According to the advances of science, we know the mustard seed is not the smallest seed, as referred to in Matthew 17. At the time, maybe it was the smallest known seed. On the other hand, maybe it was more about the idea of faith, rather than science. The advances of science have helped us to understand our universe and the process of life much better, but it still does not explain the fullness of our spiritual dimension in which we live. Things happen that we cannot explain. Science cannot fully describe what faith is, but it can explain some visible positive results of faith; as well as, negative results of immature faith.

So, with that in mind, we explore the spiritual dimension found in Ephesians 6. You may not believe in a spiritual dimension that has evil, satan, demons, and the alike. Paul did! Jesus did! Many others do in our time! Maybe Paul is putting things in prospective for us. There is a cosmic battle between heaven and hell, good and evil, God and satan, and angels and demons. Don't be fooled, God and satan are not equals. There is no dualism here. Scripture clearly reveals that God is the ruler and most powerful, and that Jesus had power over the demons. In the end of this cosmic battle, God wins! Love wins! Faith wins! This focal passage helps us to realize that the true enemy is not the person you are having difficulty with, it is the powers of evil that works behind the scenes. Evil is always seeking to destroy

and damage. God's main desire in our lives is to redeem us and build us up in faith. As we interact with God and one another, remember Jesus' words that said, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27).'" Jesus also said to his disciples as he sent them out, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16)." Why did he say that, because they were going to encounter the same things Jesus did: demons, systemic abuse and sin, evil activities, and death? So, as you interact with God and others, be wise to the forces at work against you that seek to bring you down and hinder the movement of God's saving work. Be gentle with people, but wise to the spiritual forces that seek to destroy.

Last week, the first thing that you needed to take up is the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The overall picture of the armor was from the Roman military. Paul was using the Roman armor, which people were use to seeing, and using it to describe what the Christian should use for armor in the spiritual battle. The belt, of truth, that went around the waist, held everything together that was used for battle. For the Christian, the truth of God, Jesus' words, and life experience give perspective on what life is like and how we should live it in the name of Christ Jesus. The breastplate, of righteousness, is what protects you from the perils of life's battles. By living a life of righteousness in the ways of God, not self-righteousness, the Christian can stay strong in the face of life's battles, and not be dragged down into destructive behavior. These are two elements that God has given us to be fortified on the pilgrimage of life.

This week, we look deeper into the breastplate of righteousness through the story of David and Goliath. The Greek word for righteousness can also be translated into justice and just. The simple meaning of this word is "doing what is right" in the name of God. David was a young person, maybe 14 or 15 years old and was known as a sheep herder. When King Saul looked at how small and young David was, he probably laughed in disbelief at what could be done by David. Goliath was a nine foot giant of a man. How could David beat Goliath? King Saul probably thought, "well, I have no one else who wants to fight the giant, so send him in since we will be defeated anyway." Funny how Saul put his armor on David. It probably was too big on him and encumbered his ability to move freely. David did have some strength about him to be able to tell the Saul that he had killed lions and bears with his stone and slingshot, while wearing his regular garments. David could not go into battle with Saul's over-sized armor on, so he didn't. God had developed David with certain gifts and abilities, different than King Saul. David could not proceed like Saul, David had to go into battle as he was and with his own abilities. Much like how we cannot face life's challenges with trying to use someone else's armor, or mimic their abilities. God has designed us with sacred

worth and abilities that are specific to just us. Do and be what you are designed to do and be.

Going into battle was different in this story. Sometimes a battle would happen in a valley where the opposing sides would be positioned opposite of one another on the hillsides. One person from each side would step up and out to do man-to-man combat in the middle of the valley. The person who lived claimed the victory for his side. In this particular battle in 1 Samuel 17, the Israelites, which were the army of God, and the Philistines were to battle. The Philistines chose a warrior that was nine feet tall, trash talked well, and carried his battle armor forcefully. When the Israelite army saw the Philistine warrior, fear gripped them. No one wanted to battle him. Then David came with his small frame and leather slingshot with rock in his pouch, to the rescue. One small rock placed in the right spot in the forehead of the giant dropped him to the ground. David won! And so did the Israelite army. Besides the rock, David had the confidence that God was with him and that he was doing the right thing. David charged while shouting the name of God for the victory. The Philistines were not going to win and take over the land reserved for the Israelites. So, righteousness and justice is simply “doing what is right” on behalf of God. Even Ephesians 2 says that God designed us to do good works. God designed us to live into a Godly righteousness that promotes justice in all activities and brings about what is right. One other lesson, God’s power in us can bring down any giant that seeks to overtake us. We all have challenges that seem like giants before us. Be like David, have confidence that God will give you strength and wisdom to triumph over the giants. When you knock them down, you stand taller than they do.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In these passages, what is the main practical lesson you get from it?

How would you describe God’s grace in these scriptures?

How has God designed you to be an overcomer? What gifts help you?

What are your giants that hold you back?

What giant can you slay this week so you have a victory?

How can you bring about justice, or righteousness, in Christ’s name this week?”

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Ephesians 6:14
“Put on the breastplate of righteousness.”
3. Think on what you can do to show your breastplate and do it.