

***Ephesians 6:12*** *For 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.*

Tonight, we give thanks for this opportunity to gather around God's Word, even in our different setting. We continue our series of mid-week worship services focused on the theme, The Son of God Goes Forth to War. Working with this war and battle analogy, we focus on a section of God's Word from Ephesians 6 verse 12. Some of us may recognize Ephesians chapter 6 as a familiar Bible reference talking about the armor of God.

### **Know Your Enemy.**

It was the defining sea battle of the largely forgotten War of 1812. Commander Perry had won the decisive battle on Lake Erie. He sent word back to General William Henry Harrison, he of later presidential campaign fame – Tippicanoe and Tyler too – these words of victory. "We have met the enemy, and they are ours." These words were destined to be written and remembered in American history. The quote is the proper mix of confidence and completeness. These words should stand the test of time like Julius Caesar's words of "I came, I saw, I conquered." But along the way the words have been pushed to the background, and there is a turn on this phrase we are likely more familiar with. At some point in time we might have heard the phrase, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Improper grammar aside, the humorous phrase was spoken about a serious reality. So often we, mankind, is our own worst enemy. The twist phrase was popularized in the old funny papers cartoon, Pogo. Walt Kelly, the comics creator, was commenting on littering. But in the 60's and 70's the idea carried on in a disillusionment about our government, the Vietnam War, and so much more. Even if we haven't heard this phrase, we certainly familiar with the concept of being our own worst enemy. We have met the enemy and he is us even has a Biblical reality. Because of our own sinful nature, the Apostle Paul writes about "the good that I would, this I do not do, the evil I do not want to do, I keep on doing."

"We have met the enemy and he is us," is certainly true. But there is another enemy of whom we need to be aware. Spiritual forces of evil. The enemy is Satan. In fact that is the very definition of the name, Satan means enemy. Satan in prided rebelled against God longing for more. He along with his evil minions was cast from heaven. Since that day he has been the enemy of God and of his people. He seeks only and always our eternal harm. So wicked and vile is Satan there is no hint of compassion or kindness. He is the roaring lion looking to devour us for an eternity of suffering in hell. In order to do so Satan speaks lies. This is his native language. Because he is the father of lies he is also given the name, the Devil. Devil means accuser, slanderer.

The devil works in lies. We see this in the Garden in Genesis 3. We see it as the devil tries to get our Savior to sin in the wilderness. The devil speaks against God. He speaks against God's grace. He wants us to think God doesn't truly love us. He wants us to think God is holding out on us. Or he wants us to think our sin is not so serious. The devil will use whatever tactic he can, but he is never telling the truth. We know this because we know the lies the devil tells. We know, because far too often we have believed those lies. When he has told us some sinful thought, some sinful desire, some sinful action will finally make us happy. Go ahead he says this is something we deserve. Everyone else has done far worse. The fruit is good, go ahead and take and eat.

Even Adam and Eve, God's perfect, hand-made creation could not resist. They gave in to the devil's lies. He is an enemy we cannot stand up to on our own. Satan is the one we are describing when we sing in the great

hymn of the Reformation, A Mighty Fortress, “on earth is not his equal.” This is the history of the Bible, this is the history of the world, and our own lives.

But our God who is gracious and merciful knows we cannot defeat the enemy. So God gave us his Son. The Bible tells us the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. The Son of God was sent into war to meet our enemy and defeat him. Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are, but was without sin. Never once did Jesus give in to the devil’s lies. He lived a perfect life of righteousness and holiness for us. The Son of God won the victory over our enemy by triumphing over him on the cross. There, on the cross, Jesus paid for all our sins, all the times we fell for the devil’s lies, or embraced them. His suffering and death pays for the sins of the whole world. His glorious resurrection assures us the devil and death and sin have been defeated. Jesus met the enemy and completely defeated him.

It is certainly good for us to know our enemy. To be aware of his tricks and tools. To know his lies. And there is a very good, and helpful way for us to know what are the lies of the devil. It relates to an illustration that has been used so many times by so many public speakers, I wondered if the story was actually true. Well, according to the internet this story is based in truth. (wink!)

Do you know how federal agents who work to identify counterfeit money are trained? They do not spend any time with the fakes, the lies. Instead all of their time and study is spent with the real thing. They learn every last detail of real currency, so they can easily identify the fakes.

It makes sense doesn’t it? It makes sense for us spiritually as well. Know our Enemy, but know the Truth. Know the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Know the Truth of Jesus’ love and passion for you as he goes willingly to the cross. Know the Truth of Jesus’ love and passion that does not change even as we face changing and frightening times. Know the truth of the victory that has already been won by Jesus over our enemy. Now “one little word can fell him,” and that word is Jesus. Know the Truth of our baptism, that now saves us, as we have been clothed with Christ. Know the Truth of our Savior’s supper given for the forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith.

We have met the enemy, and our Savior has defeated him. Amen.