

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) To watch **sermons recorded** on Zoom on our YouTube Channel, go to the FPCP website: <https://www.fpcpataskala.com/> and click on WORSHIP or follow us on Facebook from the homepage.
- 2) Please invite family or friends, who want to join us for live worship on Sundays @10:45am, to request access by emailing their name, email, & phone number to fpcopataskala@gmail.com
- 3) A meditative worship service at 7pm on Good Friday 4/2 is on Zoom. Be aware that the service contains graphic images depicting Jesus' journey to the cross.
- 4) There will be two **worship services on Easter 4/4**. The 1st service is 8:30am in the sanctuary, by reservation only already filled to 40 seat capacity. The service, led by ruling elder Curt Hungerford, will last no longer than 30 minutes, including only Scripture, prayer, and a benediction, which will be a closing hymn outside. The 2nd service at 10:45am on zoom will include a sermon and more music.

WORSHIP for March 7, 2021

Prelude played by Megan Ladd, “My Hope is Built”

Streaming CCLI 20373701; ; Music by Wm B Bradbury; Words by Edward Mote, 1863; Public Domain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K67S1KtmscM&list=PLAdy2hvW6PL8_1itXDbTRrCeI331DmVVU&index=15&t=0s

Call to Worship: Psalm 18:30-33, 35 Responsively

As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.

For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?

It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.

He make my feet like the feet of deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.

**You make your saving help my shield – and your right hand sustains me;
your help has made me great.**

You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.

Opening Hymn: “Battle Hymn of the Republic”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORsNiReoCsw>

Prayer of Confession: Ephesians 2:1-3 Responsively

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.
(Pause now for a time of silent confession.)

Assurance of Forgiveness: Ephesians 2:4-10 Responsively

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ

*even when we were dead in transgression –it is by grace you have been saved.
And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*

**In order that in the coming he might show the incomparable riches of his grace,
expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves.

It is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

**For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

“The Gloria Patri”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgcYD_m4OhU

Hymn of Preparation: “Open My Eyes that I May See”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDceaG7kFQA>

“Scripture cannot be set aside... What does Scripture say?” John 10:35 & Romans 4:3.

Prayer for Illumination: Unison

**Lord, through your Spirit enable us to consider your Word, and to enact it in our lives to bring
you glory and praise. Amen.**

Scripture Readings: Ephesians 6:13-15

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6%3A13-15&version=NIV>

SERMON: “Belt of Truth” by The Reverend Dr. Janet Hufford

Watch sermon on: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAdy2hvW6PL93B6hbgsTwxf93Evs575yd>

Last week we began to hear of the protective apparel for members in the family of God, which is armor of light to penetrate the powers of darkness that combat against God's family. In today's verse three components of the protective gear are listed: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace. These are the obvious subjects of this 3 point sermon.

But before we begin exploring each piece of armor, let's understand how they come to be a part of battle gear. In order to reduce chinks, the pieces need to be firmly secured and fitted. For this purpose, kings and other leaders in battle had armor bearers. These bearers acted as valets to secure the vital pieces of armor in place. The wearer needs help to fasten their armor. The gospel of peace must be fitted. The breastplate of righteousness put in place. And the belt of truth securely buckled. Or else the armors slips, exposing vulnerable flesh underneath, which becomes a visible target for one's opponent.

So who is the one who puts these layers of armor in place for us? He is the one who wore no protective armor, who was left exposed and vulnerable, when he bore our sin upon

the cross. He is the one who shed his blood on our behalf. Christ Jesus is our armor bearer. Jesus is not only the bearer, but he covers us with the protection of his blood, which is the armor that we wear. Just as Jesus' role is advocate and judge, he also paid the price, atoning for our sin, paying for our debt upon the cross. So with the armor he takes on more than one role. The armor is the light of his resurrection, but we are also covered with the power of his blood shed for us.

Now let us begin with the gospel of peace. This portion of Scripture may correspond to Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace." We may be reminded of the surefooted mountain goats, the ibex, that David admired at En Gedi. Isaiah's verse is also quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15. We can stand our ground, when our feet are fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Some may remember the day when shoes department attendees carefully measured our feet to fit us for new shoes. Or how our parents helped to tuck all in place in our winter boots to keep the snow out. Jesus does this for us, like washing the feet of his disciples before his arrest. Even more amazing is that the ground upon which we stand is Christ. He is our foundation. He is our rock. He is our ground, upon which our feet firmly stand, fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. The armor of Roman soldiers also included the gear of boots fitted. These boots were suited for battle with deep spikes to allow traction for sure footing in battle. But the readiness of our footwear comes from the gospel of peace, the joyful news of Christ the prince of peace coming. Yet we know that peace cannot come to earth in full in the midst of Satan's war on the world, on humankind, and with God himself. Satan does not cooperate with the peace of God that comes through the Son of the Living of God. So Christ himself claimed that he did not come to bring peace but a sword to distinguish from good from evil. The peace of Christ brings victory over evil, bringing peace through the ultimate destruction of evil. Jesus is the overcomer, greater than he who is in this world. This is the good news of the gospel of peace. Therefore, walking in the footsteps of Jesus, we stand our ground against the evil of Satan, fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. We cannot stand firm barefooted. We must be ready. We must be fitted. And as his disciples, we fill Christ's shoes. We wear his gospel. We are protected by his fitted shoes.

Another important piece of armor that Christ puts on us is the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is imperative, mentioned 301 times in Scripture. Further, the armor of the breastplate is imperative. We carry it literally "close to the breast" in order to protect vital organs like our heart and lungs. Like footwear, the breastplate too needs "rightly" fitted, otherwise the enemy can aim his weapons into the open places in the armor that exposes our vulnerable flesh and vital organs just below the surface of skin and muscle. Note that this piece of armor is specifically referred to as the breastplate of righteousness. This partially refers to the need of the aforementioned right fit, but righteousness is more than a right fit. Consider that the Hebrew high priest also wore a breastplate to signify his religious status. In the priestly breastplate were set 12 precious stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. In the breastplate were also carried the *Urim and Thummin* cast to determine the will of God. Thus, the priestly breastplate was also referred to as the breastplate of judgement. In contrast, followers of Jesus wear a breastplate of righteousness. For Jesus is The High Priest

and the righteous judge. He is righteous. He models righteousness for his followers. But as a high priest intercedes to God most high for the people, Jesus stands before God the Father for us as our Advocate and Intercessor. We cannot be righteous on our own. We are guilty. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But thankfully the Father sees us through Christ who is righteous. So we appear before the Father as righteous. Our verdict from the righteous judge is not guilty, but innocent because of Christ, the chief cornerstone, more precious and perfect than the stones of the tribes of Israel, has fully paid the debt of our sin. Through Christ we are righteous. As his soldiers and followers of him as our commander in chief, we wear Christ as the righteous breastplate sealed over our heart.

The final piece of armor that Christ applies to us is the belt of truth. The belt is the first battle ware mentioned in Ephesians. A belt seems a narrow and flimsy choice of armor for first mention, but the belt is that which holds all else in place. One may think of the importance of a weight lifters belt keeping even internal organs in place against the strain of physical lifting. The belt of a soldier also often had a protective loin cloth draped from it. If not dressed in full armor, robes would be tucked into the belt to gird one's loins in preparation for battle. But perhaps the most vital role of the belt was to hold the sheath to carry one's sword. The sword is mentioned specifically later in Ephesians as the only offensive weapon, but without the belt there is not place to carry the sword except to constantly keep in hand, an impractical choice. But with the sheath of the sword attached to the belt, the sword was readily available when needed. Also note that the piece of armor which is our current subject is referred to as the belt of truth. Like righteousness, truth is a central theme of scripture referred to 222 times! Paul continuously exhorts believers to recognize and stand up for God's truth. How we distinguish truth scripture reveals is through scripture. And scripture reveals that truth is not a negotiable. Truth is an absolute. For truth is not a ideology, philosophy or choice of belief, truth is a person. John 14:6 quotes Jesus as boldly and clearly identifying himself saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." He is truth. And when we deny Jesus' word, we deny Jesus as The Word, the absolute truth. In denying Jesus as truth, our belt is loose. The core of our being is out of balance. Our center is off center. We no longer don the belt of truth, making all armor piece ill fitted and ineffective! No wonder the description of armor in Ephesians 6 begins: Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist. Recently I heard someone describe how in order to have a back brace to be effective help was needed to tighten it. Jesus buckles tight the belt of truth for us.

In summary the key point is that Jesus fastens our boots, breastplate, and belt. We cannot rely on our own preference for style and comfort. We need to surrender our choices to be fitted by and with Jesus. He is peace, righteousness, and truth. We are not.

Lord Jesus fit us to effectively serve you and to stand against the enemy who opposes you. We stand on you the foundation of peace, righteousness, and truth. Amen.

**Affirmation of Faith:
Ephesians 6:10-17**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6%3A10-17&version=NIV>

Colossians 3:12-14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A12-14&version=NIV>

Hymn of Response: "Who Is On the Lord's Side?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfunlcqcBXA>

PRAYERS of Joy and Concern, followed by:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Please Continue to Give in Dedication to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus

Prayer Of Dedication: *Unison*

Jesus, Our Savior. In view of your mercy, we offer up our thanks thru giving. Amen.

Doxology

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqpXWF15avU>

Closing Hymn: "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1q-fDpiKng>

Benediction: Ephesian 6:23-24 *Responsively*

Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love,... in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**