

Sunday Sermon December 3, 2017. The 1st Sunday of Advent

Sermon Text: 1 John 3:8. The reason the Son of God appeared, was to destroy the devil's work.

Sermon Theme: Jesus was Born to do Battle

All around us we see the signs that Christmas is right around the corner. Whether it is the decorations in the stores, the lights in the windows or in the neighbor's yard, or the music on the radio everything tells us that Christmas is just a few weeks away.

These weeks before Christmas are supposed to be a special time for anyone who believes in Jesus. Just as the stores took out their decorations and got ready for Christmas, just as the radio or television stations got out all their Christmas programming and music to get people ready for Christmas, so we should be getting ready for Christmas in many ways.

Our preparation for Christmas doesn't have anything to do with sales or decorations or music. Our preparation begins in our hearts. The season of Advent is the time when we prepare our hearts and minds to praise and thank our God for sending his Son to be our Savior.

There are many ways for us to prepare for Jesus. Some have Advent services, others devotions or Bible Studies, still others use an Advent calendar with Bible-themed passages. Part of our preparation is also our worship. The special themes of these 4 Sundays before Christmas focus our hearts and minds on the way that God prepares us for Jesus to come.

The hymns we use during this season help us in our preparation. These themes of Advent preparation are in the words we sing. Our first hymn this morning had many of those Advent themes. We sang of the The King of Kings, Jesus' humble birth, the Savior of the world is here, Jesus brings joy and peace for us, we praise and thank him for the life and salvation he brings, and finally we prepare our hearts by the Holy Spirit to welcome him.

These themes of joy and peace are amazing to focus on during our preparation because they point us to the manger. However, in our Sermon Hymn this morning, we sang some words that sound very a bit different from the joyful words we sang in our first hymn. Jesus comes to break oppression, He comes to set the captive free, He comes with rescue speedy To those who suffer wrong, O'er ev'ry foe victorious.

Advent is a time when we prepare our hearts for the peace and joy Jesus brought, but we also remember peace would not come on its own. It came at a cost. We hear in our sermon text this morning that Jesus was born to battle. **The reason the Son of Man appeared was to destroy the devil's work.** He came to destroy and to save.

If you would ask any child in Sunday School why Jesus came they would say, "Jesus came to take away my sins." This is a very good answer. In our sermon text, John shows us how Jesus would take away our sin. He had to destroy the devil's work.

The devil's work is clear in Scripture. Since the first rebellion in heaven, the devil has tried to take the good things God has given to us and destroy them. The devil does not want us to experience the peace and security of the Lord. The devil does not want us to know the comfort that we find in our forgiveness or the hope of eternal life. The devil's work is to lead us into sin and tempt us to walk away from God to hell.

The devil is good at his work of leading us away from God. Adam and Eve knew God better than any person has ever known him. God had created a wonderful perfect, world for them, they ruled over this world. They walked and talked with God. But even though they knew all about God, they still fell into the snare the devil laid for them and they disobeyed God.

The devil continues to be good at corrupting us. In our reading from Genesis there are two great truths that we hear about man and what the devil can accomplish with a heart that is not focused on God. **The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. (Gen. 6:5)**

We see these two great truths in many places in Scriptures. David tells us our wickedness is so great because we are born in sin. **Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Ps. 51:5)** Jesus tells us that our hearts are also evil and full of sin. **For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. (Matt. 15:19)**

The Bible also tells us where the devil's work will lead us, **The wages of sin is death. (Rom 6:23)**

On this first Sunday of Advent preparation, it might seem strange that we had the Flood as our Old Testament lesson. However, the flood shows us what happens when the devil's work is not confronted by people who stand ready with the Word of God, built up by the Holy Spirit.

Look at how the devil worked in the time of Noah. First, the devil tempted the sons of God, the believers, to not listen to God anymore. They did not care about choosing believing wives for themselves. Instead, they were more concerned with looks. These unbelieving wives led them further down the path of sin and unbelief.

Then, when God, in his love, gave the people 120 years to repent, instead of listening to God's Word and heeding his message, they mocked Noah and his family for following God's command.

All the while the people were following the devil's work. Only Noah and his family held to the Word of God and stood firm against the temptations that the devil laid.

While we may not want to admit how sinful we are, the devil has a foothold in our lives. We are sinful and we can't stop. There are some sins we like and we don't want to give up. Others, we continue to fall into through ignorance or weakness. The devil wins the battles against us all too easily. We need help in this battle against the devil.

As we look into the manger we might see a little baby, but do we see more than that? Do we see a warrior who is willing to go to battle for us. Jesus was born to battle the devil and to win.

Even though the devil does not want us to experience God's love and forgiveness, God would not allow us to go to hell. God promised that he would send a warrior, his own Son to fight against the devil and to destroy his power.

This battle with the devil would not be with conventional weapons of war. Although the devil would try to confront and defeat Jesus with his temptations, Jesus would fight the devil with the Word of God. This Word of God stood as his armor in battle, his sword and his shield to defend him and to cut the devil to pieces.

Jesus would battle, but he would not fight in a way that we would recognize. As Jesus was led to the cross it looked like Jesus was defeated. He did not raise an army, he made no attempt to win his trial, he made no attempt to escape, he did not raise his voice against his accusers, rather he continued to walk to the cross. When he was there, nailed to the cross, the power of sin and death was thrown against him. In what seemed to be a pitiful sight of a dying man he called out, **It is finished.**

To our eyes it might seem like Jesus lost the battle. We would not see Jesus' victory immediately. Jesus would not show his victory until three days later. The war had gone on, the battles fought. The devil had tried to corrupt Jesus. He had tried to destroy God's plan to forgive you and me by having Jesus sin. All it would have taken was one sin for the devil to win.

If the devil had won, Jesus death would have been the end. Jesus would have suffered the same fate that any sinner receives. Death is death. That tomb would have been where they buried a valiant warrior who had fallen in battle. But when the women came to the tomb, Jesus was not there, it was empty. Jesus had battled the devil and he had won. He had destroyed the devil's power and by destroying the power of the devil, Jesus would save us.

The angels could sing of good news of great joy because Jesus was being born to do what God had always promised would happen. The devil would be destroyed. They sang to proclaim the love of God, in Christ, to save his people from their sins and give them heaven

We have reason to celebrate this Advent because our Jesus has come to bring us the same gifts that he won. When we look at our Savior walking to the cross, we do not see a defeated Jesus who went to the cross without saying a word. We see a Savior who was willing to endure all of these things to fight for us. We do not see a defeated Jesus as he hung on the cross fading away, he hear a victorious Savior who was willing to take all that the devil could throw at him, even suffering and death. We do not hear a cry of failure, but one of victory, **"It is finished."**

There is no sorrow at the tomb, only joy because the devil could not hold Jesus in the grave.

In a few minutes we will sing of the battle that Jesus won. We will sing of the destruction he brought and the victory he won. Come, O long-expected Jesus, Born to set your people free; From our sins and fears release us By your death on Calvary. Jesus fought this battle to free us from the punishment that sin deserved and the death in hell that sin brings.

May today be the beginning of our Advent preparation. And, as we make our preparations for Jesus to come this month, may we not just see a little baby in a manger, or some presents under the tree. Let us see the warrior who was born to do battle for us. Let us see the victory that he won and the greatest gifts that he has given to us.