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**SERMON TITLE: The War Cry: Prayer**  
**SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:18-20**  
**DATE: April 14, 2019 PALM SUNDAY**  
*Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

Read also Psalm 67:3-7.

**W**hen Jesus came into Jerusalem on this day, he came as king and conqueror. It is a picture of when he will come again to judge the earth. He has conquered Satan. He will now reign.

This is the picture from Zechariah 9:9-10:

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph . . . ! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey-- riding on a donkey's colt. I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

Jesus is giving us a picture of Christus Victor; God, through Christ, defeats the powers of sin, death, and the devil. Jesus is victorious! He has fought the battle and won. He has defeated our enemy and rescued us from sin, death, and Satan.

Jesus came into Jerusalem on this day as king and conqueror, predicting the day he will return to judge the earth. Today, Jesus is victor, but we still look forward to the time that the weapons of battle are exchanged for peace.

We still must fight the battle "against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12).

Paul was in the battle. Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, titles it "A Fight to the Finish." Paul writes this letter from prison. He and the Ephesus congregation were friends; he had spent several years there but he left abruptly. Let's look at Paul's life experience in Ephesus. Turn to Acts 19:23-20:1. This is the story (abridged):

*Serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the goddess Artemis. Many people were employed. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them: "Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! I'm not just*

*talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis-- this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout Asia and all around the world-- will be robbed of her great prestige!" At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

*Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. Other officials, friends of Paul, also begged him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater. Inside, the people were all shouting. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there. The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He tried to speak. But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

*At last the mayor was able to quiet them down to speak to them.*

*"Citizens of Ephesus, Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess. If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.*

*When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia.*

That's what it was like as Christianity was breaking through into Asia, into the world. Jesus said, go into all the world. That's daunting. Do we have a strategic plan? What

about resources and volunteers? They had no power to do it and neither do we. Jesus is calling on major steps of faith and that call continues. It is a battle. So how are we to go?

Last week we learned six principles, and if you were not here, I would encourage you to read the sermon. These sermons go together. Paul speaks of powerful weapons of spiritual warfare. Let's take a look. (Eph 6:14-18)

The first five are defensive:

**The belt of truth** –

Think of the belt as a utility belt of a policeman. It carries the most important tools in fighting a battle. Everything can be weighed by the truth.

**The body armor of God's righteousness** –

When you act rightly, it protects the heart (emotions) and soul.

**The shoes of peace** that comes from the Good News –

If people do not respond to your message, shake the dust off your feet.

**Hold up the shield of faith** to stop the devil's fiery arrows –

When you are discouraged, remember your faith. Your faith will defend you.

**Wear salvation as your helmet** –

Know in your mind that you are saved, in life and in death.

These are *defensive*, protective weapons in spiritual warfare. They are things you own—your defensive weapons given you by God and you are to wear them.

But then Paul shifts. He thinks about *offensive* play. Like in athletic games—they are a battle, if you will. Not lethal, of course. But there is an offense and a defense. In the same way, in spiritual warfare we have two offense actions:

**Take the sword of the Spirit** – which is the word of God.

Call on the Holy Spirit to help you, strengthen you, to give you the right words, to lead you, and to pray for you.

Here's the next step, today's Scripture (Ephesians 6:18-20):

**Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.**

Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

Prayer is the weapon. As soon as you sense a battle, use your offensive weapon.

Look at Jesus' prayer life. He prays before selecting the disciples, before miracles, and after miracles. He sometimes prays all night. He prays before the crucifixion.

Look at Jesus and his battle—he went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. He prayed from the cross. Prayer carried

him through the most difficult, horrible battle that anyone could ever wage. Are you listening to his instructions? What did he say to the disciples?

*Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.*

*Why are you sleeping?*

*The spirit is willing; the flesh is weak.*

An angel came to him as a result of his prayer and strengthened him for the battle.

I imagine Paul began praying as soon as the riot broke out. Where's the work of the Spirit? Perhaps it is here:

- ✓ His traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, were dragged in but spared.
- ✓ Paul wanted to go in, but others' restrained him and he was spared.
- ✓ Alexander was drowned out by riotous shouting.
- ✓ The mayor stepped in and managed to get control and calm the rioters.
- ✓ He gave the opposers to Paul a clear and legal path through the courts.
- ✓ The crowd was dismissed and sent home peacefully.
- ✓ Paul was able to say goodbye to friends and leave town safely.

Stay alert and no sleeping. Pray at all times for all your believing friends that they would speak to others boldly. Pray that you may not come into the time of trial. But if you do, be persistent in your prayers and you will be strengthened.

Paul continued on with his travels to various cities spreading the good news. Later he would write this about the experience as a follow-up to his prayer request that he boldly explain the Good News (2 Timothy 4:14-18):

*Alexander<sup>1</sup> the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.*

*At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.*

What offensive weapon are you using in your battle? Pray at all times, stay alert, be persistent. The Lord will give you the strength and victory. *To him be the glory forever and ever.*

AMEN

<sup>1</sup> Note the name. Look back at the story of the riot in Ephesus. Perhaps Alexander who was unable to speak was going to do all he could to injure Paul and The Way. However he was prevented at that time by the Holy Spirit. Are you praying when you have opposition? Lean on the offensive power of God and pray!