

Coastal Community Church Vision

Hope beyond our brokenness

Trust in our Risen Savior

Restoration for our city, nation, and world

Today... I choose to be changed by Jesus, I choose to seek Jesus first, and I choose to join Jesus in His resurrection work.

Ear Tug. Ask Permission

I need to clear something up real quick. I said two weeks ago that submitting to others and putting them first can be really hard when you've been hurt because sometimes the people you love die or leave or love another. So I didn't realize that people would think this comment was about me and April, which is not the case. I was literally looking at the congregation and seeing people who have gone through those situations. I've been vulnerable with you and will continue to do so...and when a sermon example applies to me or to my family, I'll always let you know. Ok? Ok.

That said, today we finally get to the last chapter of Ephesians! This week and next I will be talking about the armor of God and spiritual warfare. So let's put our armor on and do some warfare! **Pray**

In Ephesians 5 we talked about submitting to one another a lot. Remember, the whole idea of submitting to one another is quite simple:

you put them first, you love them well, you support them, you make them the priority—not yourself. Why? This is exactly how Jesus loves you. Paul then gives examples of how this Jesus way of loving others then applies to our life. Paul talks about submitting to one another in marriage, submitting as children and parents, then submitting to each other when we have a position of power as a leader or when we are under leadership. All these examples have the same point: I am choosing to submit myself to another person so together we can create the highest possible good. In other words...we love like Jesus loves, lead like Jesus leads, work to serve just as Jesus does, so that God's Kingdom can come, not my own. And its within this context that Paul then begins this last section of his letter to the church in Ephesus which is all about spiritual warfare:

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Let's pause at the first word: Finally. With this word, Paul is pulling together every concept he's talked to us about for this entire letter.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Finally. Ephesians 1...you are adopted, chosen, forgiven, and claimed by God. Be strong in your identity in Christ. Hold onto who you are. Ephesians 2...you were lost and now you're found, saved from your hell by His grace, given mercy, seated next to Jesus now and for all eternity, saved for His

beautiful purpose in your life. So finally be strong in the Lord's love for you. Hold onto His faithfulness and care for you. Ephesians 3- let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith. Let Jesus bear your burdens. Let Jesus hold your heart together. Follow God's lead. Finally. Ephesians 4- live a life worthy of the Gospel, finally. Don't dive back into the old way of living apart from God where you tear yourself and others apart...Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power and choose to live with Jesus. Ephesians 5- You can't submit to another person and love them well on your own...be strong in the Lord, finally, and let His love wash over you and fill you so that you give His love away.

Finally. So how do you do this? Paul has an answer

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

We are in a spiritual battle. There's no point in denying that we aren't. I've heard people tell me that spiritual warfare only happens like in Africa or some far away place. Nope. It's here too. I remember as a teenager waking up in the middle of the night to having some evil presence over me, choking me, terrorizing me...my tongue swollen, my body frozen in place...and having this loud voice in my head say 'Speak the name of Jesus'. I started with half the work...the choking cut of my airway...I got 'Jesus' barely out of my mouth with the last breath in my

lungs and the evil presence left in an instant. This happened over and over again for the next ten years. Hmm...maybe I was in a spiritual battle? Do you think?

I never understood that the enemy hates me. The enemy wants to rob from me every good thing Jesus has given me, to destroy every good thing in my heart, and lead me into death. But I can look back at my life and see how every time I drew near to God, every time I pursued God's heart, every time I started to pray for others and love others...the enemy would come to end that work immediately. Temptation, chaos, attacks... the enemy hates you and I because we literally can destroy the enemy's plans with a single prayer, a single act of generosity, a single moment of forgiveness. We become unstoppable, a tidal wave of light and hope, washing away all the darkness and evil of the enemy, when that single moment becomes a string of moments tied together...that's called obedience. The enemy can't have that. So the devil and his minions attempt to derail, steal, destroy, and replace the good that you have with twisted lies that slowly kill your heart.

Imagine your inheritance from Jesus as a bank account filled with all the hope, love, faith, purpose, His power and presence you'll ever need...billions and billions just for you. The enemy wants to take that so you have nothing and then burden you with the debt of hopelessness,

anger, resentment, faithlessness, and despair...so much crushing debt that you'll want to give up completely and thus your life in Christ, your purpose, your impact is killed. The devil is scheming to do this...plotting, watching, waiting for the perfect time. You literally have demons assigned to destroy you. You're in a battle that will never end until we are in heaven.

This is why the moment you pray or read Scripture you are distracted and fall asleep. This is why it's hard to get into worship at first...like you're distracted by something or you find yourself criticizing some portion of it. The enemy doesn't want you praying...you'll receive every good Jesus wants for you if you pray. You'll wreck the enemy's plans for others if you pray. The enemy doesn't want you reading God's word and remembering His love for you...then the enemy's attacks and temptations will fail. The enemy certainly doesn't want you worshipping because literally our worship is our offensive weapon that demolishes demonic strongholds in our hearts and creates space for the Holy Spirit to work miracles.

So put on your armor. Stand against the devil's schemes. Take back what the enemy has taken! Wake up! How do you put on your armor? It's real easy. **Jesus, armor on please!** Jesus puts it on you. And let's be real clear who the enemy is. It's not the Kansas City Chiefs. It's

not the political party you can't stand. It's not greedy politicians or soulless corporations or foreign governments or the illuminati. It's not your annoying neighbor. It's not even the person that hurt you.

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.

Your enemy is the devil and all his demons. Hate the devil, not people. Fight against the devil, not people. Demolish the devil, not people. Destroy the enemy's plans, not people.

But Andy, how? Make the problem the problem, not the person the problem. Paul has taken 5 chapters to tell us how to fight this good fight...it's the Jesus way, not the world's way. We pray. We love. We forgive. We stop using the tools the devil wants us to use...resentment, pride, bitterness, anger, hatred, entitlement, martyrdom, frustration...and we start using the tools Jesus has for us.

I know this isn't easy. That's why in every command Paul is actually using the second person plural—stand together, stand against the devil's schemes together. **We don't do this alone.** This is NOT lone ranger time where I run out onto the field of battle and just start handling my business. For years I tried to do it all alone and I would get absolutely wrecked. We've seen enough movies to understand this reality. The first

'hero' to fight the enemy alone always gets mowed down. When Paul was writing he had first hand experience of seeing Roman soldiers linking shields together to create an impenetrable defense against attackers. This is why we gather together, worship together, pray together, lean on each other, and are vulnerable with each other. We stand together, united. This is why we tell each other when we need more financial support, more prayer support, more love, more practical assistance... we're no longer alone. Like Kurt said last week...you're not alone... there's thousands standing with you.

Paul then drives home the point again:

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Four times in three verses Paul says to stand, twice to put on the full armor of God. So what's God's job and what's our job? Our job is to get back up when we've been knocked down. Stand. Paul says 'stand' four times because we get knocked down all the time. These past four months...I've been knocked down. The enemy has been scheming...he knows that if he can get me to carry all my burdens myself I'll drown. And that's what I've done. The enemy knows that if he can get me to pray for others but never to rest in Jesus myself...I'll drown. And that's what I've

done. The enemy has been studying me, and you, for a long time. We get knocked down. I've been knocked down. And sometimes, and this applies to me, we don't want to stand anymore. It all feels too much. Like Elijah, we run and hide.

I took Jonah to school this week on Monday and we were waiting outside his classroom for his teacher. The moment his teacher came, Jonah dropped to the ground so he could play with the doormat. Jonah loves school. Jonah loves his friends and his teacher. But in that moment Jonah's toddler brain took over and he would not get up. When he was 4 or 8 or 11 I could lift Jonah with ease off the ground in these situations. But he'll be 19 in May and he's 180lbs and 5'2" and his atomic mass somehow is denser than anyone on planet earth and when I used all my strength to lift him, he lifted his arms like a toddler and slumped to the ground. It's really hard to get someone to stand that doesn't want to stand...in fact, it's impossible. And that's when Jesus told me: "You're being like Jonah".

I haven't been standing. What does this look like for me? It looks like I haven't been taking time throughout the day to give Jesus my burdens. It looks like not taking moments to listen to Jesus about what to do next. It looks like feeding my resentments and staying in my hurt rather than standing in my identity in Christ. It looks like choosing self

pity rather than gratitude. It looks like wanting to run like Elijah even in the face of incredible victories.

So this week I've had a lot of talks with close friends who have spoken hard truths to me: Andy, look around at all the people who love you. Stand with us. Andy, see the devil's schemes to get you operating by yourself...stand with Jesus and let him carry your burdens. Andy, you're in total pity party mode in the midst of God answering miraculous prayers...stop giving into the devil's schemes...stand in the truth, with us. I needed my friends to tell me hard truths. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is written so that would stop running and start standing. I would rather my friends tell me the truth at the expense of my feelings than lie to me about where I'm not standing in order to spare my feelings.

So I've had to do a lot of standing, a lot of praying, and a lot of repenting this week. I've had to command the enemy to be quiet, to be bound so I can think...and then after I've repented of the lies I've believed...to leave. When we pray against the enemy, we don't ask: We command. We don't say please, otherwise the enemy will say 'no thank you'. Grammar matters. We don't wish or hope...we command. We have been given the keys of the kingdom. What we bind is bound. So bind the enemy. How? "I bind and silence anything opposed to Jesus that's attacking or lying to me now in the powerful name of Jesus. I

command anything opposed to Jesus to leave me right now, in Jesus' name, and go to Jesus to be judged. Jesus I need you right now, your presence and help." We will talk a lot more about this next week. Here's the basic idea: Standing against the devil's schemes is both pushing the devil out and inviting Jesus in. Bad out, good in. If you just tell the enemy to leave and no good is put in its place...the enemy will come back bigger and worse. Standing is repenting of our behavior and receiving forgiveness and then choosing to live differently. Standing is rejecting a lie I've been believing and start living from the truth of who I am in Christ and **with Jesus** every step of the way.

I don't do this alone. Ever. I need my friends. I need their help to understand where I'm off because I can't see it when I've fallen down.

It's time to stand back up my friends. Take back what the enemy has stolen. Stand in the truth of who you are in Christ. Don't just stand when all your prayers are answered...stand together when the storm is raging. Martin Luther King Jr wrote "The ultimate measure of a follower of Jesus is not when they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but when they stand at times of challenge and controversy." When everyone around you is angry, stand and be strong in the Lord by choosing gentleness, compassion, and kindness. When you are

misunderstood, stand in the hope that God understands you and He is your defender. When you feel confused and lost, run to your Heavenly Father in prayer and stand in the hope that He gives wisdom to all his children who ask. When you feel knocked down, call out to your friends and they will help you stand.

Remember: Your armor is not your own. It is a gift directly from Your Heavenly Father. Your job is to stand, to ask for help, to choose to pray rather than to run, to choose to engage rather than to hide.

God's job is to handle the outcomes. God's job is to command your giant angel, who is with you always, to battle on your behalf. God's job is to change their hearts. God's job is to provide. God's job is to make a way where there is no way. Your job is to love, to be generous, to pray, and to worship.

So will you stand with me, for God's Kingdom to come in our own lives and in the life of this church? That we might break down the gates of the hell people are living in them and bring them home? After all, our story isn't that **we** conquered what killed us or that **we** made it all happen. Our story is that standing or fallen, dead or alive, Jesus has never left us...he always is with us...He is our victory, our help, our Savior, and friend. We stand with Him. We are not alone.

Pray

Benediction

Table Talk