**Guarding Holy Ground**

**Bible Study on Ephesians 6:10-20**

1. Our Situation

* Living in an evil day with the apparent triumph of the evil one and the spiritual forces of evil in the church and in the world
* Open attacks on the church and the Christian faith
* Resultant sense of helplessness and discouragement
* Question: what can we do in the face of this onslaught?
* Paul’s answer in Eph 6:10-20
* ***Our battle is not against blood and flesh.***
* Involvement in a spiritual battle
* Call to be peace keepers by guarding holy ground

1. The call to guard duty in Ephesians 6:10-20:

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.***

***Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the devil’s schemes,***

***For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,***

***but against the rulers, against the authorities,***

***against the cosmic powers of this present darkness,***

***against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.***

*Therefore take up the whole armor of God,*

*so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,*

*and after you have done everything, to stand.*

***Stand then,***

***having fastened the belt of truth,***

***and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,***

***and having fitted your feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace,***

***and, in addition to all this, having taken the shield of faith,***

***with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one;***

***and receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,***

***praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and petition,***

***and staying awake for this with all persistence and petition***

***for all the saints and on my behalf,***

***so that a word may be given with the opening of my mouth,***

***to make the mystery of the gospel known with boldness….***

1. Explanation

* Comparison of Christ’s army with Roman soldiers who were peace keepers rather than attack troups
* Armour: defensive apart from sword
* Task: guarding the empire at the frontier as at Hadrian’s Wall
* Duty: standing on guard at post in one of three night watches
* Sounding alarm if attacked to call out the troops
* Death penalty for falling asleep or deserting their posts
* Assumptions
* No need to seek out the enemy
* Enemy seeks us out: attraction to the light
* Demonic power from the desecration of what is holy
* Christians as soldiers: peacekeepers on guard duty rather than spiritual crusaders against unbelievers or evildoers
* Guard duty for holy territory conquered by Christ
* Only enemies: Satan and powers of darkness
* The devil’s target
* Your congregation
* Your pastors and your families
* His strategy
* Attack on the truth: deceiver and slanderer
* Attack on righteousness: accusation and condemnation rather than absolution and justification
* Attack on the gospel of peace: bad conscience that cripples us rather than peace with God
* Attack on faith: your confession of faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds
* Attack on salvation: your assurance of salvation
* Attack on God’s inspiring word
* His deadliest weapon against our chief defence
* Fiery arrows aimed at the shield
* Arrows dipped in burning pitch
* Arrows dipped in poison
* Destruction of faith by accusation and condemnation
* Two tasks
* Standing guard at our allotted post
* Staying awake to watch for attack
* Night vigil: watching with our ears in the darkness
* Use of Christ’s priestly armour and spiritual power
* Wearing the armour given to us in baptism
* The belt of truth
* The breastplate of righteousness
* The boots that the gospel of peace provides
* The shield of faith
* Using the armour that we receive each day from Jesus
* The helmet of salvation
* The sword of God’s word
* God's word as our only “offensive” weapon
* Keeping guard in the darkness: use of ears
* Use of God's word and Spirit’s power in prayer
* Guidance by the Spirit through the word in prayer
* Operation by the power of the Spirit in prayer: the one thing that the devil fears most and wants to prevent at all costs
* Different posts for guard duty: my unique station
* Guard duty by prayer for the saints in our family and congregation
* Calling out the champion to defeat attack
* Prayer for those placed in our care
* Need for watchful, persistent wakefulness for people under spiritual attack
* Your pastor
* Your immediate circle: family, congregation, friends
* People that God puts in contact with you
* People who are sick or in trouble
* People who have sinned: intercession by standing in the breach for them
* Use of Luther’s morning and evening prayers in the Small Catechism for daily guard duty: page 327 of *The Lutheran Service Book*