

SUITING UP

(Ephesians 6:10-20)

Intro: In my days as a chaplain.

- I was headed to the jail one day.
- #I parked behind the school.
- \*Of a Roman Catholic Church.
- +About 1½ blocks away.
- #My parking place.
- \*Their contribution to jail ministry.
- Rain was pouring down.
- #I was wearing a knee-length raincoat.
- #I had an umbrella.
- But the wind was blowing so hard.
- #Rain was coming sideways.
- By the time I got the 1½ blocks to the jail.
- #My pants were soaked from the knees down.

When I walked into main confinement that day.

- Director of social services took one look at me.
- #She said:
  - \*"Rev. Dake, we've got to get you out of those wet pants."
- I said:
  - #"And into what?"
- She said:
  - #"I've got an orange jumpsuit you can wear."
  - \*Orange jumpsuits were what the inmates wore.
- Now I was all for empathizing with the plight of prisoners.
- #But I didn't want to over-identify with them.
- #So I politely told Mrs. Brown:
  - \*"No thanks."
  - \*"I'll stick with the wet pants."

There are some uniforms we would rather not wear.

As the people of God we have a different uniform to wear.

- Put on the whole armor of God.
- #Get suited up.

I. We Are Involved In A Battle.

A. There Is Evil In The World.

1. We all know that.
  - a. It's been that way almost since the beginning of time.

2. We've all experienced conflict.
    - a. Within our families.
    - b. Within our marriages.
    - c. Within our circle of friends.
    - d. Within our jobs.
    - e. Within our church.
    - f. Within our world.
  3. Conflict can be so destructive.
    - a. It can destroy harmony.
    - b. It can destroy trust.
    - c. It can destroy good will.
    - d. It can destroy love.
    - e. It can maybe even destroy faith.
  4. Most of us don't enjoy living with conflict.
    - a. We avoid it.
    - b. We defend ourselves against it.
      - We declare a truce.
      - We negotiate a settlement.
      - We kiss and make up.
  5. But sometimes we're ready to go to war.
    - a. We get fed up.
    - b. We want to teach those evil-doers a lesson.
    - c. We want to put those evil-doers in their place.
    - d. We want to eradicate evil.
  6. So we're prepared to get suited up to do battle.
- B. But Where Is The Battlefield? Who Is The Enemy?
1. Our human conflicts are not the problem.
    - a. Not really.
    - b. They are but symptoms of a much greater evil.
  2. "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh."
    - a. But against:
      - Rulers.
      - Authorities.
      - Cosmic powers.
      - #Of darkness.
      - Spiritual forces of evil.
      - #In heavenly places.
    - b. Ephesians 6:12.
  3. Holy smokes!
    - a. If that's what we're up against.
      - Evil that is:
        - #Cosmic in scope.
        - #Supernatural in power.
    - b. Then, by golly, we had better be plugged into a force.
      - Cosmic in scope.
      - Supernatural in power.       #Or we are all toast.

4. What weapons do we have against evil?
  - a. We don't have any, to speak of.
    - What are our words?
    - What are our strategies?
    - What are our techniques?
    - #To eradicate evil.
  - b. We spend so much:
    - Time.
    - Effort.
    - Energy.
    - Money.
    - #Trying to eliminate something.
    - \*That is so far beyond our reach.
  - c. At our best.
    - All we can do is try to control the symptoms.
    - #There is evil in our world.
    - #There is evil in us.
    - We don't begin to have the cure.

## II. Put On The Whole Armor Of God.

### A. God Has Already Defeated Evil.

1. It happened almost 2000 years ago.
  - a. In Jerusalem.
  - b. On a cross.
2. On Good Friday.
  - a. Satan took his best shot.
    - Jesus.
    - #The Christ.
    - #The Son of God.
    - \*Crucified.
    - \*Executed.
    - +Dead.
    - +Buried.
  - b. It looked for all the world like Satan was the winner.
    - For a couple of days anyway.
3. But on the third day.
  - a. On Easter morning.
  - b. There was resurrection.
  - c. There was the living Lord.
    - Thumbing his nose at Satan.
    - Saying.
    - #"Hey, buddy, you took your best shot."
    - #"Guess what? You are a loser."

4. Satan has been defeated.
  - a. But he hasn't yet retired from the field of battle.
  - b. He would like to take as many of us with him.
    - As he possibly can.

B. So Put On The Whole Armor Of God.

1. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power."
  - a. Ephesians 6:10.
2. Get suited up in the armor that God gives.
  - a. Truth.
  - b. Righteousness.
  - c. Gospel of peace.
  - d. Faith.
  - e. Salvation.
  - f. Word of God.
  - g. Prayer.
3. Have you ever noticed that almost all of this armor is for defensive purposes?
  - a. Belt.
  - b. Breastplate.
  - c. Combat boots.
  - d. Shield.
  - e. Helmet.
4. Only piece of armor that might be considered to be an offensive weapon.
  - a. Sword.
    - Word of God.
  - b. But even a sword can be used for defense.
    - When I was a hospital chaplain.
      - #I visited a patient one afternoon.
        - \*Who had brought her Bible along from home.
          - +It was a well-used Bible.
            - =Worn cover.
            - =Wrinkled pages.
      - #I made some comment.
        - \*That she had brought her homework along.
          - +To the hospital.
      - #She said:
        - \*"I never go anywhere without my sword."
5. God's armor is not for offense.
  - a. To defeat the forces of evil.
  - b. That's God's business.
6. Our armor is for defense.
  - a. So that we can stand.
    - Against the wiles of the adversary.
  - b. So that we can withstand attack.
  - c. So that we can stand fast in the faith.

7. When we find ourselves in a conflict situation.
  - a. We're often tempted to focus on:
    - Winning.
    - Flexing our muscles.
    - Being right.
  - b. We often forget.
    - What God wants from us is faithfulness.
    - #Being faithful.
      - \*In what we say.
      - +How we say it.
    - \*In what we do.
    - +How we do it.

C. Don't Forget What Uniform You're Wearing.

1. Don't forget what team you represent.
2. I remember the first uniform I wore.
  - a. Maybe it was the second uniform.
    - I might have had a Cub Scout uniform first.
  - b. When I was 10 years old.
    - I signed up for Little League baseball.
    - I was "drafted" by the Jaycees.
    - I got a schedule of the practices.
    - #But I came down with:
      - \*Chicken pox.
      - \*Mumps.
      - \*Measles.
      - +I forget.
    - #I missed a week or more of school.
    - #I missed baseball practice.
    - Coach called our house.
      - #Wondered why I hadn't come to practice.
    - My dad explained that I was sick.
    - Coach said:
      - #"Well, we'll try someone else."
    - I had been cut from the team.
      - #Before I had even been to practice.
    - So that summer.
      - #My friend Al Koschmann and I.
      - \*Played "minor league" baseball.
      - +No uniforms.
  - c. Next spring I signed up for baseball again.
    - There were two new teams added that year.
    - #All of us who hadn't been on a team the previous summer.
      - \*Those who had been cut.
      - \*Those who were new to town.
      - #Were placed on the new teams.

- I was on one of those new teams.
- #Our coach was also new to town.
- \*He was good.
- \*I learned a lot from him.
- #His son was new.
- \*He was a powerhouse pitcher.
- #We were good.
- \*We won the Little League World Series.
- +Well, the World Series.
- =Of Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
- New teams had new uniforms.
- #Never been worn.
- #Fresh out of the box.
- \*They were flannel.
- +Cream colored.
- =Not yet bleached white from washing.
- +Trimmed in blue.
- =MEDICS across the chest.
- \*I wore #9.
- +I was so proud.
- =Of that uniform.
- =To be on that team.

3. In Holy Baptism.

- a. God gives us a new uniform.
  - Marked with the cross of Christ forever.
- b. God makes us a part of God's team.
  - We do well to remember that.
  - #Especially when we are in a conflict situation.
  - \*We are on God's team.
  - \*Those with whom we are in conflict.
  - +May be on God's team, too.

4. As we come to the end of our Pony Express stewardship process next Sunday.

- a. We'll be collecting:
  - Estimate of Giving cards.
  - Time & Talent sheets.
- b. I've recommended to the Church Council.
  - This would be a good time to:
    - #Restaff.
    - #Refocus.
    - #Reinvigorate.
    - \*Our Ministry Teams.
- c. Our Ascension Constitution.
  - Talks about Standing Committees.
  - #I don't want to reword the constitution right now.
  - \*We have better things to do.

- But I want to talk about Ministry Teams.
- #Similar thing.
- d. What we are about is ministry.
  - Not meetings.
- e. I would like our approach to ministry.
  - To be teamwork.
  - #We ought not to have:
    - \*Only one person working on stewardship.
    - \*Only one person thinking about evangelism.
  - So when you're asked to serve.
  - #I hope you will give serious consideration.
    - \*To being part of:
      - +Stewardship Ministry Team.
      - +Evangelism Ministry Team.
      - +Education Ministry Team.
      - +Property Ministry Team.
      - +Worship and Music Ministry Team.

Concl: God has made us a part of God's team.

- God has given us our uniforms.
  - #In Holy Baptism.
- God feeds us.
  - #At God's training table.

Let's get suited up!