

Humanities Vital Victory

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0:00] The sermon text for today is from the Gospel of John, chapter 18, verses 1 through 11. After Jesus had said these things, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden.

And he and his disciples went into it. Judas, who betrayed him, also knew this place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing everything that was about to happen to him, went out and said to them, Who is it that you're seeking? Jesus of Nazareth, they answered.

I am he, Jesus told them. Judas, who betrayed him, was also standing with them. When Jesus told them, I am he, they stepped back and fell to the ground.

Then he asked them again, Who is it that you're seeking? Jesus of Nazareth, they said. I told you I am he, Jesus replied. So if you're looking for me, let these men go.

[1:16] This was to fulfill the words he had said. I have not lost one of those you have given me. Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.

The servant's name was Malchus. At that, Jesus said to Peter, Put your sword away. Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me? This is the word of the Lord.

I hope my Father, we come now to this passion narrative and ask that you, Lord, would show us Christ in his glory.

The whole gospel of John has been leading up to this. The glorification of Christ. His death and exaltation. And God, you have a word for this church this morning.

Not only us, though, you have a word for all the churches in this region. And you are so sovereign, so big, so reigning supreme, Lord, that you actually have a specific word for each church.

[2:23] And so I think about there's people here from other churches in this area this morning. And you have a word at GVC for that church. You have a word for Grand Heights at that church, a specific word.

And you have a word for Trinity Baptist of New Haven. And this morning, you have a word for Shoreline from John 18. And so, Lord, I ask, as it has already been prayed, that you would soften our hearts.

Make us receptive to this word, the inner, sufficient scripture that you have given to us. The Holy Word of God. As we consider these spiritual things, would you give us spiritual understanding. And change us, Lord, for your glory, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Well, good morning, church. As Brad said earlier, there's people here that I don't recognize.

And so it's always just good to see more people gathering in God's name. And so we just welcome you to Shoreline. Our name is Mike, one of the elders here at Shoreline. And we have been in the Gospel of John since November 27th of 2022.

[3:24] And so we've been in this text for a while. And throughout the Gospel of John, we saw that there was a rising tension. As Jesus was performing miraculous signs and declaring words of power and authority that amazed and enraged the Jews.

And we saw that his culminating sign in John chapter 11 was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Which prompted the Jewish religious leaders then to cement their plan to put Jesus to death.

So having been rejected by the Jews, Jesus then retreats from the public eye to spend his last remaining days in private with his disciples. So we spent the last four months, right, listening to Jesus as he comforts and instructs his disciples.

Preparing them for what is to come. And then John 17, he lifts up that beautiful, majestic, cosmic, in scale, intercessory prayer for those 11 disciples.

And for all the disciples to come. That's us in this room today. And this morning, we are entering the next major portion of the Gospel of John.

[4:34] It's the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. Chapters 18 to 20. And the Church email, I encourage you all to read those chapters as a collective unit. 18, 19, 20.

Read them. If you haven't done that, I encourage you to do that this week. And even as we continue forward for probably, I think, the next 10 to 12 weeks in these chapters. Read them over and over again.

Now the danger, the danger in preaching through these chapters is our familiarity with the narrative of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. Right? If you've been in the church for any amount of time, you know the story.

Right? You've heard it before. You've heard it over and over again. Every year during Holy Week, especially, we review the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. And I was raised in a Christian home. I've been hearing this for my entire 36 years of life. Some of you for decades longer still. But whether you've been hearing about Jesus' death and resurrection for seven months, or seven years, or 77 years.

[5:36] First, you probably don't know everything there is to know. There's probably more knowledge to gain as we walk through it. But second, and far more importantly, I promise you this. The Holy Spirit isn't done yet.

Leading the Gospel message into your heart. Wherever you are in life today, he wants the good news about Christ to penetrate your heart even more deeply.

He wants to keep renovating all the rooms and spaces in your heart that the Gospel can affect. And he wants us, church, he wants us to better reflect this Gospel today than it did yesterday.

Right? He's shaping us into the image of Christ. And he wants to give himself glory. He wants to give us increasing joy. And he wants us to image this Gospel, his character, to the world.

That they might be compelled to Christ for eternal life. So do you want those things this morning with me? Do you want those things? I hope that you do. And I'm going to pause and just pray again.

[6:42] Lord, this message, you've heard this so many times. But there's a fresh word here for us today. And that all of us are in the works in progress.

As long as we're on this side of eternity. We want to be shaped by the Gospel message. Would you speak to us, Lord? I pray. Amen. The title of this sermon is Humanity's Vital Victor.

Humanity's Vital Victor. And here's the first thing. It's actually a question, not a point. Jesus is fully man, but is he the one? Is he the one? See, two times in this passage, there in verse 5 and verse 7, Jesus is referred to as Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus of Nazareth. Now this is perhaps the most humble of all the titles of Christ in the New Testament. Right? Because it conveys his humanity. He's a man with a name from a place.

And in this title we're reminded that Jesus walked among mankind in physical time and space, clothed in flesh, having emptied himself of so much of the glory that he had experienced from eternity past in heaven.

[7:51] We prayed about that in John 17. Becoming like you and me in our finiteness. Jesus became fully man. And we're reminded of that.

Jesus of Nazareth. But there's more going on here. Because in these verses, John is showing us that Jesus is not just any man. Jesus is the second Adam.

Now where do we see this in this passage? And why does it matter? Well it says when Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered.

And in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we're told that Jesus goes to Gethsemane, which is a garden located within the Mount of Olives, which was an olive orchard just east of the temple in Jerusalem.

And John here, though, he specifically refers to it as a garden. And he intends for us to see the symbolism. John has placed all sorts of symbols throughout his Gospel narrative.

[8:53] He intends for us to see this, and in fact he's going to mention a garden again in chapters to come. He wants us to compare this encounter in this garden to a previous encounter in a garden that occurred at the beginning, the Garden of Eden.

And that garden, the people of God, Adam and Eve, were confronted with evil, with Satan himself, the serpent. And they failed.

They failed to remain true to God. They succumbed to the temptation. They failed to trust and obey their loving Maker. And as a result, sin entered the world, and it affected everything, which we know by experience.

Everything is tainted, affected with sin, corrupted. Mankind was separated from God. But now here in John chapter 18, mankind once again enters the garden and faces off against true evil.

You see, Jesus is here. He's leading his new community of faith. And he's met with Judas and this angry mob. But it's not just Judas, is it?

[10:04] Like, it's Satan himself. And you may recall from John 13, he wrote that after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. So what we have here is round two of the garden scene.

And the question is, will Jesus, like his and our forefather Adam, fail again? Will he reject God's ways and succumb to evil?

Will mankind remain oppressed by sin and Satan and death? So that's the cosmic struggle that's presently at hand in John 18. And that's the cosmic significance of this garden encounter.

The stakes are high. It's the second Adam. He's also the second David. This one might be a little harder to see. But it says here, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron.

And there's another illusion here. Because one of Jesus' forefathers had crossed the brook Kidron, having been betrayed by his own son and a close friend. And that was King David, right?

[11:06] So now that we're back in the Garden of Eden, God had made Adam and Eve a promise that one day someone would come from the line of Eve, from her seed, to crush the head of the serpent.

But history advanced forward. All throughout the book of Genesis, we're left wondering, who is this person? Who is the one? Who is going to crush the serpent? But sin continues to wreak havoc on humanity.

And this savior of mankind is nowhere to be found. Was it Abraham? No. Isaac? No. Jacob? Joseph? It wasn't Moses? It wasn't Gideon? It wasn't any of the judges of Israel?

But then the monarchy is established, right, in the book of King, or 1 Samuel. Is it King Saul? No, he's a train wreck, if you know his story.

Ah, but then, but then, David, the man after God's own heart, he comes to reign. And Israel is thinking, surely, he's the one. And God makes David this epic promise in 2 Samuel 7, verse 12, saying, your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

[12:16] Your throne shall be established forever. But David died. It wasn't him, right? All of the kings of Israel and Judah follow in David's footsteps and die.

Now in John, chapter 18, another man from the royal line of David is here. Jesus of Nazareth. Is Jesus, the descendant of David, who will establish his throne forever?

Is Jesus, the eternal king, come to redeem God's people and set up a secure kingdom? Now the answer to these questions is of vital importance.

Not just for the disciples, but Jesus. Not just for those in Jesus' day, but for men and women of every age. I wonder this morning if you realize just how important the answer to those questions is. I wonder if you realize your need for a victor this morning, for a savior from among mankind, one who will obey God perfectly, one who will defeat sin and Satan and death and ruin and reign and righteousness forevermore.

[13:31] You know, Paul tells us in a convincing rational argument, Romans, as it is written, none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God.

All who turn aside, together they become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. And you say, I'm actually a pretty good person, Mike. And the Bible tells us that we are all infected and impure with sin when we display our righteous deeds.

They're nothing but filthy rags. And Paul reminds us that the wages of sin is death. We're slaves to sin.

Dead in our trespasses. Having no way of escape. Deserving of divine judgment for our sin.

Committed against a perfectly just, a perfectly holy God.

The Bible says if you break one law, one law, you're guilty of breaking the whole thing. If you break a law, you're a lawbreaker. And under a perfectly holy God, we're deserving of judgment.

[14:35] We are, you are, desperately in need of a Savior from the race of men. Jesus was born into the race of men.

Is he the one? Is he the one? Well, let's see how the narrative continues. And here's the second thing that we see in this text. Jesus is the only true God.

Jesus is the only true God. So, we learn in verses 2 and 3 that Judas, like Adam and Eve before him, he turns the garden, a place of intimacy and fellowship with Christ because Christ would bring his disciples there and have times of fellowship.

Judas turns it into a place of sin and rebellion. He leads this mob, right? This mob which was people from some of the Jewish religious leaders and some of the Roman soldiers which they had procured, wielding lanterns and torches, searching for the light of the world.

Ironic. Weaving weapons to fight the Prince of Peace. So much irony. And then John writes this, Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, knowing all that would happen to him.

[15:49] Can anybody say that? Then Mike, knowing all that would happen, nope, no, I don't think so. Because Jesus is not just a man. Jesus, at the very same time that he is a man, is the only true God.

The only true God. Because God is the one, the only one, who knows the end. from the beginning. He knows it all. Jesus is the only true God. And then John continues, Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you seek?

They answered, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am he. Now, if you've been with us throughout our time in John, you've learned that when Jesus says, I am he, he's not just referring to his human identity, but to his divine identity.

So we're just saying about the great I am. Jesus is claiming that right here. He's claiming to be the great I am. We especially saw that in John chapter 8 when Jesus said, before Abraham was, I am. And they picked up stones to stone him, but it wasn't his time then. That's what Jesus is claiming, that he is Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, Israel's faithful, covenant-keeping God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, the king and the ruler of all.

[17:11] I, even I, am he, and there is no God besides me. It's in Deuteronomy 32, and that's repeated all over the book of Isaiah, especially in the center of Isaiah.

Jesus is the I am, with all authority. He is the I am. God in the flesh, walking among mankind, wielding all authority.

So, did you catch what happened as Jess read before, after he says this? To Judas who betrayed him, standing with them. A side note, John makes really clear that Judas is the betrayer.

But even though Judas is the betrayer leading the mob, Christ is the one moving things forward, which we're going to touch on later. When Jesus said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

They drew back and fell to the ground. This mob, with lanterns, torches, weapons, coming to arrest Jesus and lead him to his death, is here completely neutralized at the word of Christ.

[18:21] They do what everybody does, authorize scripture, before the presence of the almighty God, give low fast. That's what they do.

Bow in reverence and submission. Now, are they doing this intentionally? John doesn't tell us. I doubt it. It's a response that they have to the presence of almighty God.

They get down, they get low. Here we have a foretaste of what the apostle Paul foresees when he writes in Philippians 2, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

See, Jesus is the I am, living all authority. And then we see, as I alluded to, Jesus advances the narrative of his own death.

Advances the narrative of his own death. So he's demonstrating that divine authority, the fact that he is the I am. I am. I am. I am the one to move this narrative forward.

[19:32] And what we saw back in verse 4, Jesus actually initiated the interaction. He steps forward and says, whom do you seek? And then, what happens after the mob falls to the ground?

So he asks them again, whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am he. So he renders the mob powerless with just a word.

And then it's almost like he's saying, okay, guys, let's go. We've got some work to do here. Can we get on with this? He's maintaining complete control every step of this story, of this history, this historical account.

And Jesus, he's advancing the narrative of his own death. And that shows us so much his love.

Right here, we're focusing on his power. He is in control.

He is sovereign. Third thing that we see, that Jesus' word is equivalent to scripture. He says, so if you seek me, let these men go.

[20:34] Given the mob coming to arrest him a command, let these men go. This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken. Of those whom you have given me, I have lost not one.

A chapter earlier, during Jesus' high priestly prayer, he had prayed, while I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me.

I guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled. The scripture that Jesus was referring to in his prayer, was Old Testament scripture.

I think Psalm 41, predicting his betrayal, but now, in John 18, that same formula is being applied to Christ's own words.

The fulfillment of Christ's words a chapter earlier is the same formula is used to show that the words of Christ are the same as scripture. We know this from the beginning of John.

[21:36] He is the word. He is the divine logos, the word made flesh. We know this from John 14, I am the way, the truth. I am the truth. Jesus himself is the word.

He is the truth. And so this is just another way for John to shout the duty of Christ. It's as if John is trying to pack in as many proofs of Christ's divinity as he can.

If he doesn't want a single reader of his account of Jesus' life to finish the book without sensing the urgent need to make a decision, do I believe that Jesus is the only true God?

Here in this passage, a related question that confronts the reader is Jesus' own question. He repeats twice for emphasis. He says, whom do you seek?

Whom do you seek? There's always a little bit more depth to what Jesus says, and I think that's intended here. Whom do you seek? And that's the question that everybody in this room this morning needs to answer.

[22:44] And what we see here is it's not actually going to cut it to simply answer, I seek Jesus of Nazareth, is it? Because that's the answer of the mob that comes to arrest Christ, the mob that comes with torches and lanterns and weapons.

And notice, they provide the exact same answer the second time, even after experiencing the disarming power of Christ, right before them. They sort of stumble back into position, prompted by Jesus' second question, whom do you seek?

And they're basically like, well, that was weird. What are we doing here, man? Oh yeah, we're seeking that guy. Let's get him. So they totally missed the point of what just happened.

So ask again, whom do you seek? Do you seek Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the wise teacher, the one to instruct you with some good life principles, the one who's conveniently going to help you raise your kids to be good American citizens, the one who's going to love you and affirm all the decisions that you make?

In other words, do you seek Jesus for your own selfish gain, to get what you want? I mean, that's what Judas did until there's no hour convenient for him.

[24:05] Or do you seek Jesus of Nazareth, the I am, the son of God who reigns with absolute power, who demands your and my submission to his

lordship?

Do you seek Jesus, the creator God, the Lord of hosts, the king of kings, in complete humility and reverent worship? That's how he is to be sought.

And Christians in the room, don't be thinking that I'm only talking to unbelievers here. I'm talking to us. Because we struggle every single day in all sorts of ways to seek Jesus as the Jesus that he actually is.

So we all the time, we're trying to seek Jesus in ways that he has not said to seek him. We try to seek him for something that he's not in our own flesh. And we're seeking him as this Jesus, the only true God.

Now it should actually bring tremendous comfort to our souls to remember that Jesus, the man from Nazareth, is also the only true God who maintains complete sovereign control over every moment of time.

[25:22] In every corner of this universe, he's maintaining sovereign control. See, even as he advances towards his death on the cross, he's in charge. How much more is he in charge of your own life?

Of all of the moments of your life that happen. Just think back over this past week, how many things occurred that you were like, why God? Why are you doing this? We have people in this room struggling with really big things.

Carla was up here last week talking about how he's been struggling for the last eight months. And Jesus reigns sovereignly. should bring us comfort to know that he can't control.

Who do you seek this morning? Now, Jesus doesn't just offer his divinity as a reason to seek him. Compelling enough as that is, he offers yet another compelling reason, and that brings us to the final point here, that Jesus is the vital spiritual victor.

The vital spiritual victor. Now, the first way that this is seen is in these same verses 8 and 9, that Jesus preserves his sheep. So, if you seek me, Jesus said to the mob, let these men go.

[26:42] This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken. Of those whom you gave me, I have lost not one. So, as Jesus heads towards his death on the cross, he ensures that not one of his disciples, not one of his sheep, is lost to the enemy.

He's guarding and preserving them, even as he himself is under fierce attack. And here, this is true in a physical sense, right? They're protected physically from the mob, but the physical is just a representation, it's a symbol of the deeper spiritual truth that Jesus, the good shepherd, preserves his sheep to the end.

And this is the will of him who sent me, John 6 39, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my father, that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 10 27, my sheep, hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

What a word of comfort. The sovereign king of the universe is also holding us in his hands. So why should you seek Jesus as Lord?

[28:03] Because he's also the good shepherd, guarding, protecting his sheep. Who would want to follow a leader like that? This leads to the next point.

how does Christ guarantee that his sheep are guarded until the end? How does he guarantee that? Look back where we started this sermon.

Jesus wins the vital spiritual battle that mankind could never win. Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.

The servant's name was Malchus. good old Peter, right? Jesus had told Peter only hours earlier, chapter 13, that he's going to deny him.

Three times, right? Not just once. So Peter, Peter's probably wanting to prove to Christ his undying royalty. He probably wants to make Jesus' words untrue.

[29:06] If you can make the truth untrue. Peter continues to be woefully misguided as to the ways and the will of God, right? Even after three chapters of instruction, three years of instruction, and all the instruction he just received in the upper room, he's woefully misguided.

Jesus said to Peter, put your sword into its sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? Jesus tells Peter, did you miss him the point? these are not the real enemy. They're not the enemy, right? The battle that I've come to fight is not a battle against flesh and blood.

It's not against the Jewish authorities. It's not against the Roman authorities. It's a battle against a vastly stronger enemy. It's a battle of eternal significance in which that little dagger of yours is not going to prove very effective.

what is the battle that Jesus came to fight? It's a battle that began where Adam and Eve failed in the garden.

[30:21] It's a battle that King David could not win. There were any human in history. The battle is actually implied here in Jesus' words.

Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me? What is this cup given to Jesus by the Father? Students of the Old Testament, which should be all the believers in this room, know this cup.

It's a symbol of God's divine wrath for sin, a symbol of God's judgment for iniquity. I'll offer this one scripture, though there are many. Psalm 75, verse 8, For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.

Wrath, judgment for sin. Jesus is saying that he drinks the cup. Jesus, who is himself the great I Am, the Son of God, is about to bear God's own judgment for sin.

Jesus, who has perfectly submitted himself to the will of the Father throughout his entire life, he has perfectly lived in conformance with God's commands. He has known the Father from eternity past in a perfect relationship of mutual love.

[31:49] The perfect man, the only true God, he will drink the cup in obedience to the will of the Father. And if he drinks the cup, what judgment then is left for men?

If Jesus bears the penalty for sin, what penalty is left to be born? None. None. You see, Jesus did not come to disarm this Jewish mob, though he did briefly, but to disarm man's greatest enemy, sin, and Satan the lord of sin, right?

And death the product of sin. See, we were powerless to defeat these strong and oppressive enemies. We had no hope of our own to bear in the upper hand. We were slaves to the darkness, unable to break free from the shackles.

You and I are all born into the race of Adam, impotent to remake ourselves into anything else. And you who were dead in their trespasses, God made alive together with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this he set aside mowing it to the cross.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. It's Colossians 2. This is the vital spiritual battle that mankind needed to win but never could.

[33:33] Jesus Christ has won the battle for our redemption. He is the vital victor over sin and Satan and death. The true Adam, not just the second Adam, the true Adam, not just the second David, he's the true David, the promised one from the seed of Eve come to strike the serpent's head.

nobody else could have done this. Nobody else could have won this battle. Only the perfect man having lived out all of God's commands perfectly, having resisted sin and Satan at every point in his life, only the only true God, able to actually drink the cup down to the dregs and live.

That's later in the story though. Only he could have won this battle. this is the main thing I've been driving at. The God man, Jesus Christ, is humanity's vital spiritual victor over the enemy.

Only he is. The God man, Jesus Christ, he is humanity's vital spiritual victor over the enemy. This is all the more reason to seek him, not only because he's the I am, but because he is your victor over the enemy.

At the cost of his own life. Because it guarantees your protection, your preservation until the end, unto eternal life.

[35:01] So seek Jesus as Lord, as I am, and as Savior, your victor. This passage also reminds us that there's only two sides in the matter.

There's Christ in his community, and there's those in rebellion. That's it. Either you seek Jesus as he truly is, and receive life in his name, and fellowship with God, or you seek Jesus for the wrong reasons, or not at all, and bear that cup of divine wrath in the next life.

And there is no on the fence. You can't be on the fence. You might think you're on the fence.

There's no on the fence. There's either eternal life in Christ's name, or eternal death apart from him. no, I pray that you choose eternal life in Christ's name. There's two more points of application for believers that I think this passage presses into our lives as we close here.

And it first goes like this. If Christ chose to bridge the infinite gap between himself and sinners for the sake of love, how much more ought we bridge the gap between one another?

[36:15] Think about this. We catch a glimpse of Christ's glory in this passage. He neutralizes the mob before him by simply saying, I am thee. And a fellow elder this week helped me consider the fact that Jesus, throughout his entire earthly ministry, he had veiled his glory so thoroughly.

He had so thoroughly humbled himself by clothing himself in human flesh as to allow men and women to draw near to him. Remember when God passed before Moses, yeah, you can't see my glory, but I'll show you my backside and I'll cover you while I do.

We can't see the glory of God. Christ has veiled his glory. He has humbled himself for the sake of love so that sinners can draw near. So, believers, how much more are we to bridge the verisely small gap by comparison between ourselves and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and our neighbors for the sake of love.

If Christ humbled himself to let you and me near him, let's follow in his footsteps. Let's bridge that tiny gap between one another and humility to draw near one another in love.

Let's bridge in the distance. Let's bridge the distance. Now, the final application point is this. The battle is spiritual not physical. This loops off the page of us.

[37:48] The battle is spiritual not physical. And we ought to consider how much like Peter we are. Peter attempts to take control of the situation vainly, finding in his own strength.

Peter overestimates his own abilities and he underestimates the force required to win the battle. Now, part of the problem is, as Peter thought that the battle was physical in nature, that it was actually spiritual.

Right? And don't we do that so often? Now, first we need to see, Christ has already won. He's already won the war.

Sin, Satan, death have been decisively defeated through Christ's death on the cross. But while the outcome of the war is decided, the battle is still raging on.

Is it not? We all feel this. We all know this. Every day, the battle is raging on. And we need to remember, church, that this is a spiritual battle. It's not a physical one.

[38:48] We need spiritual armor, spiritual weapons, which we only have access to in Christ and in the Spirit. It's what Paul says in Ephesians 6, finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. Paul is not over speaking here.

There is a cosmic struggle going on every day and we need to fit ourselves with the armor of God to fight, to be victorious.

As part of this, it's helpful to remember that they, they are not the enemy. enemy. See, we so often look at other people in this world.

[40:01] Could be the elitists advancing an LGBTQ agenda. Could be an English or a biology professor that ridicules you or other Christians for their faith in the classroom.

Could be a conceited or demeaning boss at work and we view them as the enemy. They're not the real enemy. They're not the real enemy. They might be an enemy on some tiny level, but they're the ones Jesus is calling us to love.

And that is a blow to the real enemy, to Satan. That's a blow to sin. He would choose to love like Christ. People that seem to be our enemies. And if those kinds of people are not really our enemies, how much less are the people in this room?

Look around you for a second. Your own family? No, seriously, look around. There's other saints in this room. And kids know that your children, your spouses in this room, treat each other sometimes as enemies.

As enemies. People have wronged or offended us, they're the enemy. When our kids are lying, tensioning on the floor, rebelling against our ultimate authority, they're the enemy.

[41:14] Enemy! Enemy! enemy! I didn't know, yeah. I cannot work too strong, do I? Just let you do, we're in an argument with their spouse, and we view them as the enemy?

Really? I'm talking to myself, guys, clearly. The real enemy in those difficult moments. it's not that brother or sister in Christ, right?

It's not your child or your spouse, it is your indwelling sin. That's the enemy. Don't look right here.

It's saving, the accuser, who prowls around like a rolling lion seeking someone to devour.

Those are the enemies. So in those difficult moments, remind yourself the battle that's going on, the real struggle. We ask the Lord for spiritual strength.

Like he's come and won the war so that we can have his spiritual strength. He's made it possible. It wasn't before. And then we can love those people, the apparent enemies, we can love them with the sacrificial, humble, selfless love of Christ.

[42:38] And see, as we engage in the real battle, as we're victorious in the power of the Holy Spirit, we give evidence to this fact. We give evidence.

When we win spiritual victories, we're declaring that Christ is the victor. As we seek Jesus for who he actually is, as we side with him, rather than the rebellious world, as we in humility bridge the gap between ourselves and others for the sake of love, as we win spiritual victories in his power, we're announcing over and over again to Satan that his reign is coming to an end, and his doom is sure. We're declaring Christ as the eternal victor who has won the redemption of mankind by triumphing over sin and Satan and death by his death on the cross.

And by God's grace, we're compelling sinners to abandon that losing side and to join with Christ, the vital victor, that they too might have eternal life in his name.

Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we thank you that this was your plan from the beginning of time.

[43:59] This blows our minds. How could this be it and what it was? How could you set your affection on us, rebels, enemies? But you did.

You have loved us with an everlasting love and you have won the victory in Christ who is our vital victor. Glory to your name this morning.

Glory to your name. God, would you work this message into our hearts? Would you change us? Make us more like Christ. Make us a people with gratitude giving you thanks and praise with our lives because of what you have done in Christ.

We pray this in his name. Amen.