

Sermon: Dress Like A Disciple

Text: Mark 6:6-13; Ephesians 6:10-20

Discussion Questions:

As we continue our exploration of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, we turn our attention to a deeper understanding of the challenges that come with identifying ourselves with Jesus. Jesus never said that being a disciple would be easy. In fact—He said quite the opposite. Jesus warned us many times over that being His disciple would invariably involve persecution, trials and even suffering. Take a few minutes to read and discuss these verses (What's the big idea of the verse? How does the verse make you feel?):

- **1 Peter 4:1** “Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.”
- **2 Timothy 3:12** “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:17** “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”
- **Isaiah 43:2** “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”
- **Luke 14:27** “And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”
- **John 15:20** “Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

Viewing these verses as a whole, we see some very important themes emerge. If our life as a disciple of Jesus is free of suffering and persecution—we need to wonder if we're really a disciple. Taking a stand for our faith in Christ will always involve persecution and push-back. But—the rewards are eternal. And the promise is clear: Whatever crisis or struggle we find ourselves in, God is with us and protecting us.

The call is clear: Be prepared! Be ready! Be strong! In **Matthew 10:16**, Jesus said, *"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."* In the same way that a snake is cautious and aware, that's how we ought to be. But this doesn't give us the green light to strike back and retaliate. Our responses must reflect the fruit of the Spirit: love, gentleness; kindness; patience; and self-control.

- Talk about this. How difficult is it to be strong in the face of opposition—and loving and gentle in the face of criticism? Is this something you struggle with?

Examination:

- Read **Ephesians 6:10-17**:
 - The Apostle Paul begins this passage with three simple but very important words: “Finally, be strong.” Forgive me for being so blunt—but I’m thinking the odds are good that only one out of a thousand Christians who read this actually take to heart and act on what Paul says here. This call to “being strong” can so easily go in one ear and out the other. While we might appreciate what God is saying to us through Paul (“Thanks for the pep-talk, God!”)—we don’t make any real changes in our lives that bear out this command to “be strong.”
 - Why not? What keeps us from actually changing from a mindset of weakness to a mindset of strength?
 - What excuses do we make as to why we CAN’T be strong in the face of struggle, or trials, or persecution?
 - Where does the power come from that enables us to be strong?
 - Verse 11 describes precisely what it is we’re up against: “the devil’s schemes.” Just to be clear—the devil isn’t some fictional little man in red tights and a pitchfork. The devil is real. He’s powerful. He is out to destroy you. And he has schemes. It makes ALL THE DIFFERENCE to identify and articulate, to the best of our ability, what tactics the devil uses to tempt and weaken us. Brainstorm ways that the devil tempts or attacks you.
 - Why does God require us to PUT ON His armor? Why doesn’t it come as standard operating equipment?
 - How organized are the devil’s forces that are arrayed against us? (v. 12)
 - What do you think the “day of evil” means? Isn’t every day evil? (see Eph. 5:16)
 - What’s the purpose of a belt—and how does truth fulfill the same purpose?
 - What’s the purpose of a breastplate—and how does righteousness fulfill the same purpose?
 - What’s the purpose of shoes—and how does fitting our feet with the gospel of peace accomplish the same purpose?
 - What’s the purpose of a shield—and how does faith accomplish the same purpose?
 - What’s the purpose of a helmet—and how does salvation fulfill the same purpose?
 - What’s the purpose of a sword—and how does the Word of God (the Bible) accomplish the same purpose?
 - Why are these things essential for a disciple of Jesus?
 - What happens if we fail to put these things on?

Application:

Paul applies this passage very succinctly in verses 18-20—and he does it with one word: Pray! Your application (assignment!) this week is to pray. Pray in the Spirit. Pray on all occasions. Pray all different kinds of prayers. Feel at liberty to make requests in your prayers. Be alert and ready to pray. Pray for other people—and don’t stop. Pray for your pastors and leaders. Pray that both your leaders—as well as you yourself—would have the courage to proclaim the gospel.