

JESUS OF NAZARETH

GUEST PASTOR

8-30-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect:

Scot McKnight: Those who aren't following Jesus aren't his followers. It's that simple. Followers follow, and those who don't follow aren't followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it.

Welcome

Good Morning!

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!

Call to Worship: Psalm 13 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Christ Candle – Light the candle as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!

We live in a dark world. A significant portion of that darkness resides in the persecution of Christians around the world for their faith in Jesus of Nazareth. In America, in general, this persecution is minimal. We are free to be disciples of Jesus as individuals, as families and as congregations. We are not singled out and threatened with death, violence or imprisonment simply because we identify as a Christian. We have it easy. That is not true for millions of Christians around the world where there are extreme consequences to being a disciple of Jesus from your family, others and the government. In many countries it is illegal to be a Christian and punishable by imprisonment or death. For the foreseeable future, we will look at some of these countries as ranked by Open Doors USA to keep us aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ who need our prayers and help and to remind us to be grateful for how good we have it here.

The fifth most difficult place to currently live as a Christian in the world is Pakistan. There are over 4 million Christians in Pakistan out of a total population of 205 million. "Historic churches have relative freedom for worship, but they are heavily monitored, and extremists regularly target them for attacks – the last one occurring in December 2017. Christian churches that are active in outreach and youthwork face more persecution. In general, Christians are regarded as second-class citizens. Also, the



country's anti-blasphemy laws are disproportionately applied against the Christian minority – making it difficult and dangerous to live out one's faith in public.”

Prayer Points: Pakistan is afflicted by numerous radical Islamic groups. Pray for the current Pakistani government to pass laws that will protect the Christians in the country. Pray for the protection of converts from a Muslim background who are extremely vulnerable to persecution from radical groups, family members, friends and neighbors. Pray for Christians who are accused under blasphemy laws. Ask God to give them strength and hope during their trials – and for justice to prevail.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!

Song: Praise To The Lord Almighty -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNqOWtMSmIY>

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
The King of creation
O my soul, praise Him
For He is thy health and salvation
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near
Praise Him in glad adoration

Praise to the Lord
Who o'er all things so wonderfully reigneth
Shelters thee under His wings
Yea, so gently sustaineth
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
Granted in what He ordaineth

Praise to the Lord
Who doth prosper they work and defend thee
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
If with His love He befriend thee

Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him
All that hath life and breath
Come now with praises before Him
Let the 'amen' sound from His people again
Gladly for aye we adore Him

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah*

Responsive Reading – Adapted from Cheryl Mishler

Come now, we, before our Living God.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Lover of My Soul.

You, who are ageless, have given to us the temporary gift of aging.

Let us run the race that is set before us.

May we not focus upon the limitation of our earthly bodies.

May we set our minds on things above, not on things of the earth.



Your plan for us has not changed, nor has your Great Commission.

Let us continue to “go into the world” wherever we find ourselves in this world.

Give us cause for action, when we are tempted to relent.

May we be doers of the Word, and not hearers only!

Let us not wither, but continue to grow in You.

May we be like a tree planted by the rivers of water!

Let us continue to keep our focus upon You.

May we not become distracted as was Martha, but focus upon that which is of most importance!

You call us to show love to all those we meet.

May we be known as your disciples, because we have love for one another.

Remind us of your promise to never leave us or forsake us.

When we pass over mountains and through valleys, remind us that you will be with us.

Allow us to “count it all joy” when we fall into various trials in the process of change.

May we trust only in you at all times and pour our hearts out unto you, for you are a refuge to us!

May we never be satisfied to the point of complacency with what we have done for You.

May we press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus. May we be diligent to present ourselves unto you, O God, as workers approved, rightly making use of your Word of Truth. For you alone are our Shepherd. We are indeed your beloved children.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may we who are merely inconvenienced by this pandemic remember those whose life or livelihood are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin of money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when social distancing is practiced to love our neighbors, let us find creative and helpful ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Song: Lord I Need You -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuvfMDhTyMA>

Lord, I come, I confess

Bowing here I find my rest



*Without You I fall apart
You're the One that guides my heart
Lord, I need You, oh, I need You
Every hour I need You
My one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You
Where sin runs deep Your grace is more
Where grace is found is where You are
Where You are, Lord, I am free
Holiness is Christ in me
Lord, I need You, oh, I need You
Every hour I need You
My one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You
So teach my song to rise to You
When temptation comes my way
When I cannot stand I'll fall on You
Jesus, You're my hope and stay
Lord, I need You, oh, I need You
Every hour I need You
My one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You
You're my one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You
My one defense, my righteousness
Oh God, how I need You*

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

We remember and celebrate the presence and participation of our youth. Pray a prayer of thanks for our youth and for their growth and development as disciples of Jesus. How many youths can you pray for by name? Give it a try.

Gospel Message: The Armor of God – Belt of Truth

This week and next we are taking a short break from the series, Jesus of Nazareth and look at the important passage from Ephesians 6:10-20 on the armor of God. We will focus on two of the more overlooked pieces of armor: this week the belt of truth and next week the shoes of preparation by the gospel of peace.

Part of the armor of God, as described by Paul, is the belt of truth. What good is a belt? And more



importantly, what does it have to do with truth? Let's find out.

The first piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:14 is "the belt of truth" (New International Version). What purpose did the belt serve for a Roman soldier? What purpose does the belt of truth serve for us?

Discovery Channel's *Mythbusters* interviewed Deputy Shawn Osborne, whose standard-issue belt buckle deflected a bullet at close range, saving his life. In spite of a big bruise, Deputy Osborne knew he was "very lucky."

Belt buckles are not designed to stop bullets. But there was a time when belts were an important part of defensive armor.

Girded With Truth

When the apostle Paul describes the armor of God, he is talking about more than a simple set of helpful tips. He is talking about the impregnable defenses of the Almighty God. These are keys to withstanding the attacks and onslaughts of the great dragon of old, Satan the devil. They are ultimate and infinitely powerful tools available to us as Christians.

And he chooses to begin describing that set of armor by talking about...a belt?

Why, of all things, a belt? He could have started with the mighty sword of the Spirit, the towering shield of faith, the shining breastplate of righteousness—anything but some measly old belt. But he didn't. So that begs the question—Why?

What was the belt used for in the Roman army?

The belt—known as the *cingulum* or *balteus*—played a crucial role in the effectiveness of a soldier's armor. It was the belt that held the scabbard, without which there would be no place to put a sword. Imagine an overzealous soldier, fired up and charging out into battle—but without his belt, and consequently without a weapon!

In addition, the Nelson Study Bible says from the belt "hung strips of leather to protect the lower body." The Matthew Henry Commentary says the belt "girds on [secures] all the other pieces of our armor." Truth should cleave to us as a belt cleaves to our body.



What is truth?

John 17:17 - Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Jesus, praying to the Father, gives a clear and straightforward definition of truth: God's Word. The Holy Bible (Scripture—the word of truth) was given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek expression translated "inspiration of God" literally means "God-breathed"! He actively and fully inspired the Bible to reveal His truth to us.

His promises, His commands, His word—they are all truth, plain and simple. After all, "The LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (Isaiah



14:27). If God says something, there is no force that can stop Him from doing it—we can rest assured that it will be done.

What does truth have to do with a belt?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 - Test all things; hold fast what is good.

As Christians, we are to test all things and then hold on only to that which is good—the truth—discarding all else. We are to be like the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). If we are not convinced that our principles and beliefs are without exception 100 percent true, how can we expect to accomplish anything?

Proverbs 3:3-4 - Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

A belt encompasses the waist. Does our conviction to the truth encompass us? As the above scripture notes, truth must be bound around us and written on our hearts—our conviction must reach beyond an outward show.

The belt used in Roman armor, as we have learned, provided a place for the soldier's sword. Our sword—the sword of the Spirit—likewise needs a sheath. Truth is vital because, like a Roman soldier's belt, it allows us to carry the sword of the Spirit and use it effectively.

What other lessons can we learn from the biblical analogy of having our waist "girded" by a belt?

Luke 12:35-37 - Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

Christ told us to always be watching and ready for His return.

1 Peter 1:13 - Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

Peter used an interesting analogy: "Gird up the loins of your mind." This implies tucking in long garments to be ready to move quickly. The New International Version translates it as "prepare your minds for action."

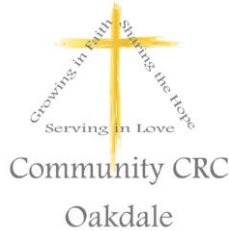
What are the dangers of not wearing the belt?

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The world we live in teaches that truth is what we make it—that good and bad are relative and that there are no absolutes, only equally valid opinions. But the Bible teaches that truth is God's Word—that good and bad are defined by Him and that there are eternal and unchangeable absolutes, uninfluenced by opinions.

Paul wrote to the Romans telling them to "not be conformed to this world." Part of that means not buying into a system of belief that says absolute truth is a myth. As Christians, we know both that there is truth and that it is absolute. However, it is true that we all relativize it to our experiences and biases.

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.



Imagine a belt with a segment missing. No matter how tiny the sliver that isn't there, the belt is still useless. To do its job, it must be one continuous, unbroken piece.

Now imagine living a way of life you don't completely agree with. Maybe it doesn't seem like a big deal—after all, what are a couple minor points that you're not sure about?

They are everything. To try to live God's way without total belief in its validity is like trying to hold your sword up with a belt that isn't continuous. Neither will work. Our trust in God and His Word must be solid, without break, or else we will quickly find ourselves without a weapon. No matter how effective the rest of our armor is, we are useless without our sword. We need to be rightly dividing the word of truth—knowing what we believe, and why.

So—how secure is your belt?

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Remember, believe the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Pray for those you might have a hard time forgiving. See them as image bearers of God whom He forgives just like he forgives us.

Song: I Will Follow -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgqD_HQQir0

Where You go, I'll go
Where You stay, I'll stay
When You move, I'll move
I will follow

All Your ways are good
All Your ways are sure
I will trust in You alone
Higher than my sight
High above my life
I will trust in You alone

Where You go, I'll go



Where You stay, I'll stay
When You move, I'll move
I will follow You
Who You love, I'll love
How You serve I'll serve
If this life I lose, I will follow You
I will follow You
Light unto the world
Light unto my life
I will live for You alone
You're the one I seek
Knowing I will find
All I need in You alone, in You alone
Where You go, I'll go
Where You stay, I'll stay
When You move, I'll move
I will follow You
Who You love, I'll love
How You serve I'll serve
If this life I lose, I will follow You
I will follow You, yeah
In You there's life everlasting
In You there's freedom for my soul
In You there's joy, unending joy
And I will follow
Where You go, I'll go
Where You stay, I'll stay
When You move, I'll move
I will follow
Who You love, I'll love
How You serve I'll serve
If this life I lose, I will follow you, yeah
I will follow you, yeah
I will follow you, yeah
I will follow you, yeah

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Those touched by Jesus are never the same. May we live in such a way that others notice there is something different about us: that we aren't characterized by worry or anxiety but by hope in Jesus Christ; that we aren't thought of as arrogant or better than but humble, giving and generous; that we aren't rocked by the storms of this life but are found grounded on the Rock, Jesus Christ. May others know us as disciples of Jesus as we touch others with the touch of Christ.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!