

**First Christian Church (Lawrence, KS)**  
**Dr. Barry M. Foster**  
**September 27, 2020**

**Deliver Us from Evil: Prepared for Battle, Engaged in the Fight**

Psalm 18 (NIV)

*1 I love you, Lord, my strength.*

*2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;  
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

*3 I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,  
and I have been saved from my enemies.*

*4 The cords of death entangled me;  
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.*

*5 The cords of the grave coiled around me;  
the snares of death confronted me.*

*6 In my distress I called to the Lord;  
I cried to my God for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice;  
my cry came before him, into his ears.*

*7 The earth trembled and quaked,  
and the foundations of the mountains shook;  
they trembled because he was angry.*

*8 Smoke rose from his nostrils;  
consuming fire came from his mouth,  
burning coals blazed out of it.*

*9 He parted the heavens and came down;  
dark clouds were under his feet.*

*10 He mounted the cherubim and flew;  
he soared on the wings of the wind.*

*11 He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—  
the dark rain clouds of the sky.*

*12 Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,  
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.*

13 *The Lord thundered from heaven;  
the voice of the Most High resounded.*

14 *He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,  
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.*

15 *The valleys of the sea were exposed  
and the foundations of the earth laid bare  
at your rebuke, Lord,  
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.*

16 *He reached down from on high and took hold of me;  
he drew me out of deep waters.*

17 *He rescued me from my powerful enemy,  
from my foes, who were too strong for me.*

18 *They confronted me in the day of my disaster,  
but the Lord was my support.*

19 *He brought me out into a spacious place;  
he rescued me because he delighted in me.*

20 *The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.*

21 *For I have kept the ways of the Lord;  
I am not guilty of turning from my God.*

22 *All his laws are before me;  
I have not turned away from his decrees.*

23 *I have been blameless before him  
and have kept myself from sin.*

24 *The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.*

25 *To the faithful you show yourself faithful,  
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,*

26 *to the pure you show yourself pure,  
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.*

27 *You save the humble  
but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.*

28 *You, Lord, keep my lamp burning;  
my God turns my darkness into light.*

*29 With your help I can advance against a troop;  
with my God I can scale a wall.*

*30 As for God, his way is perfect:  
The Lord's word is flawless;  
he shields all who take refuge in him.*

*31 For who is God besides the Lord?  
And who is the Rock except our God?*

*32 It is God who arms me with strength  
and keeps my way secure.*

*33 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer;  
he causes me to stand on the heights.*

*34 He trains my hands for battle;  
my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

*35 You make your saving help my shield,  
and your right hand sustains me;  
your help has made me great.*

*36 You provide a broad path for my feet,  
so that my ankles do not give way.*

*37 I pursued my enemies and overtook them;  
I did not turn back till they were destroyed.*

*38 I crushed them so that they could not rise;  
they fell beneath my feet.*

*39 You armed me with strength for battle;  
you humbled my adversaries before me.*

*40 You made my enemies turn their backs in flight,  
and I destroyed my foes.*

*41 They cried for help, but there was no one to save them—  
to the Lord, but he did not answer.*

*42 I beat them as fine as windblown dust;  
I trampled them like mud in the streets.*

*43 You have delivered me from the attacks of the people;  
you have made me the head of nations.*

*People I did not know now serve me,*

*44 foreigners cower before me;  
as soon as they hear of me, they obey me.*

45 *They all lose heart;  
they come trembling from their strongholds.*

46 *The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock!  
Exalted be God my Savior!*

47 *He is the God who avenges me,  
who subdues nations under me,*

48 *who saves me from my enemies.*

*You exalted me above my foes;  
from a violent man you rescued me.*

49 *Therefore I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;  
I will sing the praises of your name.*

50 *He gives his king great victories;  
he shows unfailing love to his anointed,  
to David and to his descendants forever.*

**[Slide 1]**    *Opening*

Good morning church! Somehow we have come to the end of September. The trees in my yard have announced their impending assault with a few advance incursions designed to test my resolve and my preparedness. What the trees do not know is that when it comes to my yard, I am completely immune to shame. Their threats to overwhelm us with unending waves of leaves piling up above our heads does not frighten me in the least. The neighbors might be aghast. But I am unmoved. I will absorb their attacks on the surface of my lawn and driveway and sweep them away at my leisure. And I have two city compost carts I can fill each week until they are all gone. (I am also cheap, so I won't spend extra money on the paper bags for lawn waste just to get the leaves out of the way faster.)

**[Slide 2]**    *Review*

We've been exploring the cry of lament, "*Deliver us from evil.*" What should we do when we find ourselves face to face with inexplicable evil? What does that prayer for deliverance mean? What does it look like?

We've looked at the place for lamenting: turning to God with our pain, and choosing to "make the turn" by trusting God, who promises to rescue us from evil. We've seen that Jesus weeps with us, showing us that God cares about what happens to us, and that he has delivered us from the fear of death through his

resurrection and the promise that we will rise and have everlasting life with him in his eternal kingdom, where all pain and sorrow and death have been eliminated.

We've also looked at the problem of temptation. Our prayer for deliverance from evil often means asking for God's help in conquering our own evil desires. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to recognize and refuse the enticing lies that can capture us in destructive habits and lifestyles. We learn to walk down different paths that lead us to spiritual health and freedom.

[Slide 3] *Introduction*

But if you've experienced temptation—which is, to say, if you're alive—then you know that fighting against your natural inclinations, against the “siren songs” that are so widely broadcast and embedded in our culture, and against the demonic suggestions that Satan whispers into your ears, is not just a metaphor. It's a real battle. Whether we're talking about fighting physical addictions (e.g., alcohol, drugs, pain medications, nicotine), behavioral addictions (e.g., pornography, gambling, gaming, social media), or persistent sinful patterns (e.g., gossip, lying, lust, sexual immorality, stubbornness, gluttony, racism, despising others, self-pity—the list of possibilities is quite long!), those battles are very real and can be very difficult.

They are also very personal. What I mean is that the war against these forms of evil is not simply an academic exercise or a discussion about ideas and hypothetical possibilities. It is a war that engages us at the personal level. And the intensity of the fight is directly proportional to the extent to which I am aware of and personally invested in the outcome.

[Slide 4]

I was a young boy when I became aware that our country was involved in the war in Vietnam. I started reading about it in the newspaper every morning. But it was something that was happening somewhere in a land far away across the ocean. American soldiers were fighting and dying—but I didn't know any of them. As the war dragged on, I grew older; I was more aware of what was happening, more capable of abstracting, so that I could begin to imagine events that were described in the paper or shown on the evening news. And because I was getting older, I was getting closer to the age at which I could be drafted into the army and sent to Vietnam. Those battles started to become much more real to me.

Of course, they were still just imaginary. If you were fighting on the ground in Vietnam, those battles weren't imaginary—they were intensely personal. Many years later, I was working with a painter who was a veteran who had served in Nam. He wasn't interested in talking much about his experiences, but it wasn't

hard to tell that the war in Vietnam had impacted him in powerful ways. Even though he was a happy man, a solid Christian who was doing well personally and psychologically, he could still feel the intensity of the battles he had been in as a soldier in that conflict.

[Slide 5]

My point is fairly simple. Just like a military war, the spiritual war against evil is real. There are huge stakes in the battle, with significant consequences depending on the outcome, including the lives of real people who are at risk. But you and I may not be aware of all of that, unless it hits us personally. We are somewhat aware of the war that is going on nearby us, with family members and friends, or in our immediate surroundings, whether that is the place we live or the wider culture in which we were raised. But we are most aware of the war that is going on within us, and the shots that are being taken at us. (Though we are not always aware of *all* of them—there is a covert aspect of spiritual war just as there is in military conflicts. The attacks are still real; we’re just blinded to them.)

So we need to remember—just because I can’t feel the intensity of the war someone else is facing, doesn’t lessen its impact on him or her. Just because I’m not as affected by that particular addiction or behavioral issue doesn’t mean that the hold it has on them is any less powerful than the things that have a hold on me. We all are facing hard battles and we all need God’s help: our prayer, “*Deliver us from evil,*” is not just a nice, religious thing to say. It is a heart cry in the middle of an intensely personal battle for our soul and our life.

[Slide 6] *Psalm 18*

Our text for today is Psalm 18, composed by King David—someone who was intimately acquainted with both forms of battle, military conflicts and spiritual war. It’s also intensely personal, just like his experiences in both arenas of warfare. Like our text from last week, this psalm has some of the elements of a lament, but it’s written after the fact. The inscription to this psalm says that David “*sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.*” It is a prayer celebrating God’s salvation, a declaration of victory that came when God intervened and delivered David from imminent death.

There are several significant things we can learn about our spiritual wars from this psalm. Let’s start with David’s personal relationship with the Lord.

[Slide 7] *David’s personal relationship with the Lord*

David opens with a sincere and deeply personal explosion of emotion: “*I love you, Lord, my strength.*” God isn’t an idea for David. He’s not some

indescribable mystical essence. “*Lord*” isn’t simply a word that David uses to talk about a higher power he can’t explain, or a feeling he gets when something goes well for him. God is someone he knows. He calls him, “*Lord*,” because he understands that God is his master, his sovereign. David is keenly aware that even though he is the anointed king of Israel, the true sovereign is the Lord God, to whom he is personally bound in a covenant that requires his obedience and the total surrender of his life.

But David also understands something else about this sovereign God—he is not just a God to be feared and obeyed. He is a God who can be loved, because he has shown his love to David and invited him to respond in kind.

[Slide 8]

I may be going over ground that has been pretty thoroughly worked here. But I don’t think that it is possible to overstate the importance of this truth for Christian faith—whether we’re talking about the faith of the church as a whole, or the faith of any one of us who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Religion is not evil or bad; that is, not necessarily or inherently. “Religion” is simply the organized expression of faith in human society. Christianity is a religion in that sense. First Christian Church is an expression of the Christian religion. But religion can either be dead and empty (because the faith it expresses has no connection to the true and living God) or it can be alive and filled with power (because the faith that it expresses comes from being in a right relation to God, the source of life and meaning, through Jesus Christ).

David’s faith wasn’t simply a matter of religious upbringing or of adherence to the prescribed ordinances of the Mosaic Law. His faith wasn’t built upon remembering to offer the proper sacrifices, to obey the moral codes required in the Law, and to maintain the rituals and affirm the beliefs that defined Yahwism—the faith of Israel (the worship of Yahweh). David’s faith was born out of his encounters with God, beginning as a young boy in his father’s home. His faith was nurtured in the fields where he watched the sheep and learned to hear the voice of God, and to respond to what the Spirit of God was whispering to him about God being a shepherd, too. And his faith was sharpened like a spear point in the wilderness as he learned to depend upon God to defend him from the king whom he had faithfully served but who now sought to kill him. David’s faith was built on his personal relationship with the Almighty. David was personally connected to the living God, to Yahweh, the God of Israel, who spoke to him and listened when he replied.

[Slide 9]     *God my Rock*

Notice how David piles up the descriptive words about God in the opening of his prayer. He is celebrating his deliverance from evil—specifically the evil of being attacked by his enemies. When David thinks about escaping from that evil, he begins with all the ways he can think of to say that God has been his defender through every attack. It wasn't luck that allowed David to escape from his enemies. It wasn't David's cunning knack for eluding Saul's armies or his brilliance as a military strategist in defeating the Philistines. David says, "*It was God—God who is my Rock, my fortress, the one who protected me with strength against foes who were too mighty for me.*" David was absolutely dependent upon God to defend him. He needed an impregnable fortress and trusted God to be that for him. There was no safer place to be.

[Slide 10] *God's response to David's cry for help*

When David found himself threatened by evil all around him, he says that he cried out to God for help. That's not unusual. Lots of people, even people who don't actually believe that God exists, will cry out for God's help when they find themselves in desperate situations. But there are two important things highlighted in this prayer that need our attention this morning. Both of them have to do with the connection between God and his world when it comes to spiritual war—the battle between good and evil, the battle between God and his enemies.

The first is David's description of God's response to his cry for help.

[Slide 11]

Whenever I read this section of Psalm 18, something inside me starts resonating, like a sympathetic vibration on a stringed instrument, and I can feel the adrenalin start pumping. I start identifying with God, with God's feelings—because he's responding like a dad. His kid is in trouble, undeservedly—though that point might not matter. What matters is that his beloved child is in danger and is calling to him for help.

David says, "*my cry came before him, into his ears.*" And God heard him. Then God got angry. God got riled up. And God came to the defense of his son.

*7 The earth trembled and quaked,  
and the foundations of the mountains shook;  
they trembled because he was angry.*

*8 Smoke rose from his nostrils;  
consuming fire came from his mouth,  
burning coals blazed out of it.*

*9 He parted the heavens and came down;  
dark clouds were under his feet.*

*10 He mounted the cherubim and flew;*



*he soared on the wings of the wind.*  
11 *He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—  
the dark rain clouds of the sky.*  
12 *Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,  
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.*  
13 *The Lord thundered from heaven;  
the voice of the Most High resounded.*  
14 *He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,  
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.*

[Slide 12]

God's response is immediate. It is powerful. And he is furious! Not with David—with those who dared to threaten his son. He leaps up from his heavenly throne, grabs his weapons, bends creation to his own ends, and sets out to rescue David and to destroy those who are seeking David's downfall.

Have you ever had someone do that for you? Your own dad, perhaps? Or someone who stepped into those shoes for a moment? I remember one such moment in my own childhood when my mom thought I could be in trouble and came looking for me. (I wasn't in danger, but I'd gotten distracted and wasn't home when I was supposed to be home, so then I was in trouble.) But I distinctly remember times when my children were being harassed or were in danger, and the protector-dad in me rose up with fierce anger. I wasn't as righteous in my anger as God was, but I understood a little of how he felt when he saw David in trouble.

Do you ever think of God in this way? Do you realize that he feels this way about you? When you're in danger, he's not ignoring you. He's coming for you.

[Slide 13] *A metaphor for God coming to his rescue?*

The language of this portion of the psalm is intense. David employs powerful imagery to describe God's intervention. Since this is poetry, it's entirely possible that David is only using this imagery as a figurative way of saying that God's deliverance was as powerful as a storm that rises suddenly and sweeps across the land with breathtaking displays of lightning bursting across the sky, striking the ground with terrifying power, and accompanied by the crash of thunder and the violent pounding of torrents of rain. If that's what he's doing, it's still a powerful image of God's deliverance, something we can understand, and possibly imagine.

But I don't think that is exactly what David is doing here. Certainly he is using figurative language throughout the prayer to increase the dramatic impact upon the reader. And there are places where his use of poetic imagery is simply metaphorical. For instance, in verse 16, David says, "*He reached down from on*

*hid and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters.*” David is likening his situation to that of a drowning man, whom God rescued by pulling him out of the deep waters. But when David was in the wilderness, fleeing from his enemies, he was a very long way from any large bodies of water. So he was not describing his situation literally. He was using a metaphor to show how he felt about his situation.

[Slide 14] *God’s supernatural use of natural means in spiritual warfare*

But in the verses I read just a minute ago, it is not only possible, but likely, that David is describing God’s deliverance in the language and imagery of a sudden storm because on one very memorable occasion, God’s deliverance came about through a powerful storm that God brought upon his enemies. To everyone around, it may have seemed like a fortuitous coincidence. But David saw God’s hand in it all—because he knew the God who was the Lord of nature. He knew that when it came to matters of spiritual warfare, battling with evil, God was quite capable of performing supernatural miracles to accomplish his purposes. But God was also quite capable (and rather fond) of supernaturally using natural means to bring about his intended ends.

I am not suggesting that David is making the mistake of seeing something that contributed to a good result for him and attributing that to God. We see this all the time—something happens that benefits me or makes me happy, so I say, “*God did that.*” Nor am I suggesting that everything that happens can be said to be God’s actions. Both of those notions are oversimplifications and misunderstandings of the relationship between God and his world.

David was not some unenlightened ancient man who didn’t know the meteorological explanation for how storms are formed, so he imagined that God had sent the storm. David had seen plenty of storms in his life. He understood them—not in the way that we do, with our super Doppler whatever computer tools to analyze wind currents and track high pressure systems and cold fronts. He knew that God, as the Creator, ruled over the weather. But most of the time, a storm was just a storm. This one time, however, because David knew his God personally, he recognized God’s saving deliverance in the coming of a storm. He saw in the natural events of a sudden thunderstorm the miracle of God’s answer to his prayer. David was in a covenant relationship with the living God. He called to his God when he was in trouble, and God supernaturally intervened in the affairs of this world to help his people. God responded to his prayer, and came in that storm to deliver David from evil.

[Slide 15]

There's a second important thing that is highlighted in this prayer that pertains to the relationship between God and his world—to us—in this spiritual battle. The first important point we noted was how God intervened to bring about his salvation for David, how he stepped into this world to defeat evil that was encroaching upon his people. The second important point has to do with how God enabled David to step into the spiritual battle himself, to join God in his war with evil that was encroaching upon his people.

After David describes how God rescued him, he begins telling of all the ways God has equipped and enabled him to excel as a warrior, and how he has used those victories to bring him to a place of rest, where he now rules as king over all of Israel, having subdued his enemies on every side. Notice what David mentions that God has done in this regard.

[Slide 16]

(1) *He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

David, the shepherd boy, grew strong in the wilderness, protecting his father's flock, as God tested him with lions and bears. He mastered the sling as a weapon before he killed the giant Goliath. Then, after being suddenly raised to the rank of commander of Israel's forces, he learned how to excel with the sword and shield. He trusted God, who gave him insight into military strategy and taught him how to lead. God was training his warrior through the events of his life, so that he could wield the ordinary weapons of military warfare and lead people in physical battles. God helped him develop skills that translated into abilities that would enable him to win wars with physical enemies.

[Slide 17]

(2) *You armed me with strength for battle.*

David is very clear about the source of his strength—physical strength, mental strength, personal strength. Twice he says that God equipped him with the strength he needed for battle. Not only did God prepare him for war by training him for battle, he built up his strength through that training process so that when he did end up in battle, he was able to succeed. God specifically gave David the kinds of strength that were needed to succeed in battle—balance and agility, hand-eye coordination, mental and physical stamina, dexterity, acuteness of perception, strength of will. As a result, David was able to do phenomenal feats on the field of battle. He pictures himself being able to run as sure-footed as a deer on the mountains, and to be able to leap over a wall in order to attack a full complement of enemy warriors.

All of his abilities—those that he had naturally, and those he developed over time—all of them, says David, came from God. And it was God who made them effective for the battles he faced.

[Slide 18]

Have you noticed that God is very specific about the abilities he gives you? That he strengthens you in ways that other people around you may lack? The battles you are facing, whether they are spiritual battles with Satanic strongholds that are well-established in this culture (or in your family!), or “ordinary” battles with cranky relatives, thoughtless neighbors, hateful and vindictive co-workers, are battles for which God has prepared you—or is preparing you right now. Those battles require specific kinds of strength that he is developing in you.

Perhaps the way to win your battle requires steady determination to demonstrate faithfulness under pressure. Perhaps it requires the strength to stand up to unfair or unreasonable demands while showing courtesy and respect. Perhaps your battle requires the marriage of unrelenting kindness and unceasing prayer. Whatever your battle requires, know this: God has already put within you the capabilities you need and the types of strength you will require to win that battle—or he is working on developing those in you right now.

[Slide 19]

(3) *Your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way.*

Personal strength is not the only thing needed to win battles. There’s a famous saying, “*An army marches on its stomach.*” Meaning what? Meaning that an army without a cook staff won’t succeed. If the supply lines aren’t sustained, the warriors on the front lines won’t win the battles. The finest fighting forces in history would never be remembered for what they accomplished if it wasn’t for the runners and launderers and cooks and all the myriad of supporting help that sustained those armies in the wars they fought.

Everyone needs help. David needed God’s personal help—and God supplied that. But David also needed help in the form of other people. He needed additional warriors to fight with him. He needed leaders who would help to train new warriors, oversee the troops in battle, help formulate strategies, assess the readiness of the army, keep the morale up. He needed young men who weren’t ready to fight who could haul weapons, sharpen swords and spears, cut firewood, serve as lookouts. He needed women who could cook and tend to the wounded and help care for the children of his army. He needed the support of a community who believed that God had called him and anointed him to be their leader for the

times when his own faith faltered, when he was unsure. He needed friends who would protect him when he was vulnerable and correct him when he went astray.

*“Your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great.”* The right hand is the hand of blessing in biblical language. And David knew that God had blessed him—he had blessed him with people who came alongside to be God’s help for him in his time of need. So when he went into battle he did not go in alone.

[Slide 20]

That “wide place” that David speaks about? That’s a way of saying that God had positioned David for success. He had put him in a place where he had room to grow, room to maneuver, even room to take a misstep, to fail without losing everything. David’s confidence grew as he realized that God had not only equipped him and prepared him, but he had placed him in the best possible situation.

When I was a young father, I really wanted my kids to love baseball, and to learn how to play the game. So I taught them how to throw a ball, how to catch it. You know, normal backyard stuff. (One of my joys in life was hearing my son-in-law thank me for teaching my daughter how to throw a baseball. Another was watching the look on the face of a guy from another church when she threw him out from third base in church league co-ed softball.) Anyway, somehow I learned that if I wanted them to love baseball, they needed to be able to hit the ball when it was pitched to them. That was always my weakness growing up, and I wanted to do what I could to position them to have success early on.

Well, if you want your three-year old to hit a baseball, you don’t start out by chucking a fastball under their chin from twenty feet away. You start by giving them a big plastic bat; you show them how to stand, how to swing. Then you do the really critical thing—you watch them swing, and then you carefully toss the ball so that it hits their bat as they swing. Then you cheer for them as they run the wrong way and forget to drop the bat.

The point is that you eliminate as many possibilities for failure as you can. You put them in “a wide place.” That’s what God did for David; he positioned him for success. Part of it involved his training. Part of it involved letting Saul descend into madness, so that the rest of Israel saw the foolishness of their king and welcomed David when they finally got the chance to do so. Part of God’s positioning of David involved bringing him the people who could serve him faithfully in the areas he would need in order to administrate the kingdom.

David recognized that all of the help he received in the form of people, provision, timing, opportunities—they weren’t happenstance or good fortune. God

was at work. God was bringing him into the place he had created him for, the place he was anointed to fill, the place for which he had been prepared.

There's one more crucial piece in David's prayer. It's the natural conclusion in the series, the key piece that makes all the others matter. Without this final crucial piece, all of the training, the equipping, the support and positioning could not bring victory.

[Slide 21]

(4) *I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed.*

David engaged in the fight. In fact, he initiated the battle! Instead of waiting to be attacked, he took the fight to the enemy. God had trained him for battle, trained him to be a warrior. God had equipped him with skills and abilities, developed his natural capacities and strengthened him even more with power that came from God's anointing. God had positioned him favorably and secured him by bringing others around him who would join him in the fight.

But all of that divine empowerment and preparation would go to waste—unless David did the only thing that God could not do. David had to step out and take hold of God's power and engage in the fight.

[Slide 22]

David was a warrior-king. He was king over an actual earthly kingdom, which he was able to obtain by engaging in earthly wars, fighting with armies of men armed with swords, bows, and spears. He had to win those wars in order to establish and maintain his kingdom against physical foes who wanted to take his kingdom for themselves. But he also had to fight those wars because those wars were a necessary part of defeating evil in this world.

The physical wars were necessary because the spiritual war between God and Satan had spilled over into the physical realm of this world, in human history, because evil had taken root in the heart and lives of people, in human society. Part of God's answer to the prayer, "*Deliver us from evil,*" was to train David—and us—so that he—and we—would be prepared for the battles that lay ahead.

God is still fighting with evil. The ultimate outcome is not in doubt. God is not fighting hoping that somehow he will defeat the devil. No, the victory over Satan has already been won on the cross at Calvary. But the battle that still must be won is the battle for you—the battle for your heart, the battle against evil that remains in this world, in you and in me. And God has so designed this world that the only way for that evil to be defeated in you, or in me, or in this world, is for you and me and everyone around us to engage in the fight. You can't do God's part and he won't do yours. By the way, there is no place for observers in this war,

only for combatants and victims. If you want to avoid being a victim, you must be a combatant. You must engage in the fight. Prepare for the battle—by calling out to God for help and going through the training and equipping he provides, by being knit together with the others he calls alongside to help into an army. Then engage in the fight; strike out against evil in every form in every place, especially in your own heart and family.

**[Slide 23]** *Transition to communion*

*[Worship team, if you would begin making your way to the platform . . . ; those who are helping to serve communion please join me in the front . . .]*

We are about to take communion. For those of you watching at home, if you have a piece of bread and some grape juice, or something that can stand in for them, go ahead and get them now, and set them aside for a moment.

While the elements are being distributed (and please hold them until we're all served), Judy is going to play a piece for us. The words will be displayed for you to read and think about as we consider what God has done in this battle with evil in order to bring us the rescue we need. He did it all through the cross.

**[Slide 24]**

That is our message; that is what we proclaim to the world when we celebrate communion: that God sent his Son to die in order to reconcile us to himself and give us eternal life. He is the only way to be reconciled with God, the only way to be delivered from evil. He bore your sins, paid the price that you owed, so that you could be forgiven. His death is the only sacrifice that can pay for your sins, your rebellion. He loves you and he will freely pardon you, if you sincerely repent from running your own life and living by your own rules, and come and surrender your life to him. You can commit your life to him right now.

If you are making that commitment to Jesus now, please let us know. We'd like to help you in your walk with Christ, and we can't unless we know who you are and what you need.

[END]

*Benediction /Blessing*

In order to maintain our safe distancing practice, the ushers will dismiss you this morning by rows. So please wait to leave until they indicate for you to do so.

*[Lift your hearts to heaven, and your hands if you like . . .]*