

The Promised Warrior
Sermon Text: Isaiah 42:13

The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.

Our picture of Jesus paints him as kind and loving, gentle and tender, caring and calm, meek and mild. He welcomes little children, seeks out the despised tax collector, and reclaims Peter, who had betrayed him. He is the Good Shepherd who came to seek and save the lost. It's a beautiful biblical portrayal of our Savior.

But our world views that portrait differently. The world sees him as a wimp who is not tough enough for the real world where little kids fight, gunshots are heard almost nightly in some neighborhoods, and we have the most armed conflicts of any period in history. There is hostility between races, between political parties, and within families. We have economic wars, wars on drugs, the coming space wars, and more. This is a *world at war*.

And yet there's a bigger war. It started long ago and has claimed victims that number in the billions. That war included the single most horrendous and world-changing battle of all time.

This Lenten season we plan to take a closer look at how this greatest war was fought as it heads toward the final showdown.

At the center of it all is one person. He is:

The Promised Warrior

You're here tonight (today) because of what Isaiah, the great Old Testament prophet, promises. Listen to this terrific message:

The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.

1. War clouds had long loomed.

In Isaiah's day (about 2,700 years ago), God's people had already been expecting the warrior for thousands of years. The first battle put Satan, our worst enemy, against Adam and Eve in Eden. They lost the battle, sin came into our once-perfect world, and with it came death and hell. What an ugly mess!

Yet immediately after that lost battle, God promised Satan that he was sending someone a lot stronger than Adam or Eve who would take the fight to him. Listen to God's promise of future violence: **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).**

The conflict God predicted was not going to be pretty. It was not going to be a discussion. It was not going to be a negotiated settlement. It would be a huge bloody struggle between Satan and the warrior who would come from Eve's family line. The end result would be that Satan's head would be crushed. He would go down . . . violently defeated!

But there would be a lot of waiting—thousands of years—before the time was right for the promised Savior-warrior to arrive. During that waiting period, the world's population grew, and so did unbelief and evil. God kept giving his people opportunities to stay strong and wait for the promised Savior. But time and time again, they ignored him and brought all kinds of trouble on

themselves.

You know the reason. They had something sinister deep inside of them. It's the same defect that infects all of us. The Bible calls it sin. No medical procedures can remove it. A surgeon's knife cannot cut it out. There is no drug that will remove it. Radiation can't burn it out of us. It's our enemy of the worst kind, and it has enemy relatives who come along with it—the devil; a corrupt, damaged world; and finally, death. There can be no peace treaty with this deadly enemy. Instead, a war must be waged so it can be totally wiped out. Isaiah's words indicate that the war clouds are on the horizon.

This Lenten season is traditionally an excellent time for us to think about our lives, to take on a fresh zeal toward repentance, and to prepare for Holy Week. The sin inside still plagues us. We are very aware that there are forces bigger than us that are at work underneath everything—forces that are dragging us down, damning us. We need somebody who is real and bigger to fight for us. This is a battle for our lives now and for eternity. Very real enemies are lined up against us. Some we can see, and many we cannot. The clouds loom large in our own lives.

Like Judah in Isaiah's day, there's a cry that starts deep in our hearts. We are desperate and weary and in need of help. When St. Paul took an honest look at his own life, he said it like this: **“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (Romans 7:24).**

Isaiah had good news for the nation of Judah. It was good news for St. Paul. And it is really good news for us!

The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.

2. The promised champion and warrior is coming!

Isaiah makes it clear that God is a promise maker. He is a God who gives hope—and here it is: He tells God's people that a CHAMPION will march out. This warrior is a HERO of the highest order . . . the greatest in world history. Look around this wonderful book of Isaiah and learn who this special conqueror is. He will have a special birth (Isaiah 7:14); he will be a world ruler (Isaiah 9:6). He is God's special servant who would bring a judgment of righteousness (justice) to the entire unrighteous world (Isaiah 42:1). His deep battle wounds would result in our ultimate healing (Isaiah 53:5). Isaiah didn't know when he would come—that was God's business. But he was certain of this: He WOULD come!

Seven hundred more years went by. A lot of waiting. But this promise was given to boost the faith of God's people to provide them the vision they needed to see the victory that was coming.

He is a WARRIOR! The picture isn't just of somebody strong on the outside with bulging muscles and superior weapons like Goliath. He is certainly not a weakling who kneels before his enemies in defeat or cringes in fear. Rather, he is a powerful fighter who knows what battles are all about. Who do you think threw Satan out of heaven? When Joshua was near Jericho, whose walls were about to fall, who was that man **“standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand” (Joshua 5:13)**? Who single-handedly struck down 185,000 experienced Assyrian soldiers when they came to destroy Jerusalem? The Lord of hosts of the Old Testament was none other than the preincarnate Christ! This warrior has thousands of years of experience in war, all as a winner. He is definitely not a wimp! This warrior stirs up his zeal; he gets pumped for the coming struggle. He loves the people he created, and he is rightfully jealous when the evil one

comes to tear them away and damn them. His wrath is definitely aroused!

He is someone so strong that he can willingly *allow* others to take him captive (only after he has knocked them down to the ground to demonstrate his power over them), beat him, wound him, and even put him on a cross. They could only do that because it was all part of his strategy. He endured it all while knowing that he could at any moment stop the whole thing and blast them with the same power he used in making the universe. Imagine that—just by saying, “Let there be,” he brought our universe into existence! As he told his disciples (Matthew 26:53), he could call on his army of angels—millions of them, if he so desired—to stomp on them like so many ants.

The Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers could not and did not kill him. Only he could willingly give up his life, and he only did that when his last enemy was destroyed.

There have been many famous warriors over the ages: the samurai, the ninja, the US Navy Seal Team Six soldier. None of them can hold a candle to this warrior because none of them possess what he had inside him. He didn't need body armor, advanced firepower, or a weaponized virus. He was like us but with one important difference: He was without sin. He was pure and holy. He was totally righteous and good. He was sent as our substitute. There was no sin or deceit in him. Not once during his entire lifetime on this earth did he ever think, say, or do something sinful. Even in battle, his only motive was love, pure love for both friend and foe alike.

You know who this warrior is, don't you? [Perhaps you might encourage your congregation to say his name.] And here is the really good news: **“With a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies” (Isaiah 42:13).**

3. The warrior will triumph!

Our promised warrior would come with a very unique battle cry. It came not at the beginning but at the very end of the battle. Both friend and foe alike are affected by the cry. You've heard that cry. You hear it tonight (today), perhaps not directly, but it's here. You hear it echoed every Sunday in this place and every day that you devote yourself to studying God's gospel. It's this: **“Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30).**

You recognize that as the sound of triumph—just as Isaiah had predicted—as our warrior brought the end to the battle for the world. His work for you and me was done. Our good and faithful Lord has won. The cry of triumph means that all our sin and guilt is forgiven. It means we are clothed with our warrior's victory. His righteousness covers us. The Old Testament gospel writer Isaiah describes it like this: **“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:2).**

Let there be no doubt here tonight (today) that Jesus Christ, the long-promised champion-warrior, came and won that war for our souls. It wasn't easy and it wasn't without great pain, even death. The great news is that he has indeed conquered not only Satan and hell but also death itself!

And because of his final victory, your guilt before God has been taken away. Your step is

lighter because that wearying load is gone. Maybe you are physically tired tonight (today) from a hard day at work, being at home with the kids, or putting up with the everyday hassles of life. But you have already noticed the refreshment you have received directly from our gracious Lord Jesus, who carried your heaviest load for you. You have received the precious promise of eternal life! Our hero and warrior won it for the souls of humanity. Faith grasps that astounding victory. Let the thought of the warrior Jesus Christ carry you through this entire Lenten time.

And tonight, like every night, each of us can say with David of old, **“In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8).** Amen.

Endnotes