

Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 30, 2015

Last week I had two sermons. This is the second sermon which begins in Ephesians 6 from last week's readings.

What is the power of God? That which is at work in the universe? Or a supernatural power which is the foundation of everything that moves and shakes? For the writer of Ephesians, spiritual power is quite practical. Not about getting my way or *controlling* the world or the people around me, spiritual power is about *connecting* with God and all which are around us. Earlier in my life, I thought it was about controlling things.

But no, it's about finding and making connections which give life and wellness. And spiritual power is not just for humanity. God's power is at work in and through the entire universe. We are wonderfully simply a part of this flowing of the power of God. Read the first chapter of Ephesians. Kosmos is the word for the universe and all in it. Yes, the writer is specific about Jesus Christ as our spiritual head, leading us by his death and resurrection into the source of life which is God. God is at work in Christ, the Spirit of Christ, connecting to us in many, many ways. Connections rather than manipulations. There is a subtle difference.

Ephesians 6 tells us to take up the whole armor of God. The armor of God is practical faith. With this armor we live. We meet challenges and disappointments and fulfill God's purposes.

There is the belt of truth. Upon truth is founded our faith. If something does not seem right, if it fails the truth test, we set it aside. Truth will always be evident. We need not accept someone else's faith or tradition for our own. It must be true in us, or it is not true.

And the breast plate of righteousness—simply put, we seek good standing in our relationships with those around us—as much as it depends on us. We can't change what others do, but we can live with integrity.

Now the really interesting piece of armor for me, and the reason I came back to this passage, is the shoes. Shoes? What do shoes accomplish? According to Ephesians, our shoes allow us to proclaim the good news of peace and mercy. Note, it's not a mouth guard or a helmet which enables us to proclaim the good news. It's our feet. Is that a surprise for you too? Our mouths do the talking. What is the main job of our feet? Walking. Action. Doing. Could it be that what we *do* opens people's ears to what our mouths might *speak*? And might it also be that our actions often *eliminate* the need to say anything at all? Our active faith in serving and helping and listening, our positive attitude *is* our proclamation. Our lives connect with others because of the unity of what we say and do. Our feet reveal our authenticity.

So we proclaim peace with our feet! Our feet take us into action. We do good things with our feet. Our feet bring us into the presence of those who need help, who need to be loved. So peace is not as much about avoiding trouble, sometimes it's about courageously, carefully, and faithfully walking into it.

Next time you touch your feet, think about them as agents of peace. How do your feet bring peace in our world? We begin with prayer and we act for peace. We courageously take steps toward peace! We do not simply wish injustice away. Our feet speak compassion and mercy. Our feet listen.

We also have the shield of faith. Faith extends our courage beyond the first hand ability to see, hear, feel, or smell the goodness of God, the mercy of Love. Faith protects us from simply being blown around by whatever is happening to us. It protects us from getting lost. From being overwhelmed by obstacles, or fear, or sorrow, or disappointment. Faith makes us steadfast.

Then there is the helmet of salvation. Salvation is an interesting concept. Some view it as a ticket to God. Say this, pray this, and you are saved. That kind of salvation is something *we* do rather than something *God* does. In the Old Testament, salvation is always the act of God—as in, “Wait for the Salvation of the Lord!” God saves the Hebrews from Egypt. God quietly saves Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saves David in battle and from his own greed. The salvation of God makes us strong if *we* are the ones *being saved*, not the ones *doing the saving*. Salvation is to experience peace from God. Peace in relationship with God.

Finally there is the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. The word of the Lord is a word of compassionate justice, a word of life, a word of mercy—but not mostly for me and my family and friends. The Word of God invites us to make the connections with all who draw life from the love of God. A Word of Freedom for those who are in bondage to the need to perform, the need to impress, the need to be anything but what they truly are. (Pause) New connections of wholeness and peace. The essence of Life.

This is the whole armor of God. The belt of truth. The breastplate of right relationships, shoes for actively proclaiming the Good News. The shield of faith to give us ongoing courage. The Helmet of Salvation because the peace and life of God is pure Gift. And the Sword of the Spirit which is compassionate justice and goodness and truth. Take these up and we will be mature and helpful and filled with the Spirit of God. We will be in communion with all around us. The whole armor of God does not allow us to defeat the opposition, but to enter into relationship. To welcome. To discover. To learn.

Therein is freedom and joy. Thanks be to God. Amen.