

THE SON OF GOD GOES FORTH TO WAR

THE PROMISED WARRIOR

The young man across the table was in tears. He was a big guy, athletic, muscular, smart, and broken. As capable as he was, his sin seemed bigger, temptations seemed stronger, Satan seemed sharper, and Jesus seemed like such a nice guy, that he wouldn't be too helpful right now. So the young man broke down. Ever had a moment like that? I know many of you are capable, durable, and smart, but so is our enemy. The Lord Jesus is about to help that young man in tears, and us.

In Isaiah 42, the Lord Jesus is not taking little children on his knee; he's defending them. He's not cuddling a lamb; he's cracking a wolf over the head. Jesus is mighty. He's violent. He's the promised warrior. So here are three goals for the next few minutes:

- 1- We want to TAKE A GOOD LOOK at the warrior Isaiah promises.
- 2- We want to UNDERSTAND WHY the promised warrior is so violent.
- 3- We want to USE THIS image in our lives during Lent.

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THE PROMISED WARRIOR

Isaiah 42:13

The LORD will march out like a mighty man,

There had been many great war stories in the Bible. Abraham once took down five kings. It's incredible, but I'm not sure how it helps *you*. Israel defeated Egypt at the Red Sea, but you will never meet a pharaoh. David faced Goliath, champion vs. champion, winner take all, but Goliath doesn't threaten you. Now take a good look at Isaiah 42:13. A warrior is emerging from the tent to fight for you. It's not Abraham or Moses or David. They all died, but not our champion. The Lord himself will part the tent flaps and rise to his full height. *The Lord* is our mighty man.

like a warrior he will stir up his zeal;

Have you seen a warrior stir up his zeal? Maybe he'll slap his helmet to get fired up or bang his armor to get the adrenaline pumping. When he sees the enemy approaching and his brothers in danger, his eyes will narrow to slits, he'll take a deep breath, and something inside him stirs. His heart is tender, but don't think for a moment that our Savior is soft.

with a shout he will raise the battle cry

Have you seen William Wallace's battle cry in *Braveheart* or Maximus in *Gladiator*? Those are just actors. Imagine the shout the Lord would raise. The blood drains from the enemy's face. The hearts of his people swell. It's about to go down!

and will triumph over his enemies.

There's no gory description of what our champion does with a sword, just a still shot from the end of the battle. The Lord has his boot on the enemy's throat. He will triumph.

UNDERSTAND WHY THE PROMISED WARRIOR IS VIOLENT

But why is it so intense? We want to understand why the promised warrior is so violent. The answer is in the last words, "his enemies." Israel had brutal enemies. Egypt tried to work Israel to death, and they were helpless to fight back. So the Lord marched out, stirred up his zeal, raised a battle cry, and let his people go through the ten plagues. The Lord was violent against Egypt, and he crushed their bloodlust under the waters of the Red Sea.

A generation later, Joshua and the Israelites ran into the walls of the great city Jericho, and again, they were helpless. So the Lord marched out, stirred up his zeal, taught Joshua how to raise a battle cry, and he triumphed when the walls came tumbling down. The Lord was violent to deliver his people from their violent enemies.

But here's what makes this complicated. The night before the Jericho attack, Joshua had a meeting with the commander of the Lord's army, and Joshua asked, "**Are you for us or for our enemies.**" (Joshua 5:13) You can imagine what Joshua was hoping to hear. But the mighty man said, "**Neither.**" (Joshua 5:14) The Lord is violent against our enemies. But who is the enemy? It wasn't Egypt, or Jericho, or Babylon. One time, the Babylonian army was attacking Israel, so they begged God to destroy Babylon. Do you know what God said? "**I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath.**" (Jeremiah 21:3,5) God was going to fight *against* Israel. The Lord is violent to defeat his enemies, and sometimes his enemy lives within his people.

God has never been racist against Egypt or Jericho or Babylon. God hates sin. He is violent to destroy sinners from Egypt, and Jericho, and Babylon, *and* Israel. God is violent to destroy sinners from ISIS and from Mount Olive. God hates sinners.

Can't you relate to that? Aren't there things that you do that you hate? Don't you hate it when you tell half-truths to your family? Don't you hate it when you are hard to get along with? Don't you hate it when you need to clear your web browser history because of what you just did? Don't you hate it when you want to do good but you can't? God hates it. St. Paul hated his sin too. He said, "**In my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**" (Romans 7:22-24)

Who will rescue me? Not me. Just like the Israelites were helpless to save themselves, you and I are powerless against sin. And that's why God promised to send a warrior. Remember what it looked like when Jesus stirred up his zeal? He saw how sin hurt you, and a passion deep inside him stirred. Our Savior is not soft. Remember when he raised the battle cry? "**It is finished.**" The blood drained from our enemy's face. Your heart swells because Jesus has just dealt with all the things you hate about you. Remember what it looked like when Jesus put his boot on death's throat? He rose from the grave, our mighty man. Who will rescue me from this body of death? Huh, not me. "**Thanks be to God—through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (Romans 7:25)

USE THE IMAGE OF THE PROMISED WARRIOR IN YOUR LIFE

The promised warrior is violent to rescue us from ourselves, from the sin that lives in our very hearts. But how do we use this image of the promised warrior in our lives? We've got six weeks until Easter, and sometimes I catch myself thinking that Lent is the *sad* part of the year. That's not quite right. Lent is the zealous part of the year. Lent is the fight. For six weeks, we'll hear how the Son of God goes forth to war to fight for us. On Wednesdays and Sundays we'll hear about Jesus in the betrayed, on trial, on the cross, and rising from the dead. You'll see this promised warrior stir up his zeal, raise a battle cry, and triumph over sin and Satan.

You can learn about how these stories of Jesus' triumph affect your life from the Milwaukee Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo is their mighty man. Sometimes picks up his dribble at the three point line, takes two superhuman steps, and throws down a monstrous two handed dunk. Then he turns to look at the bench and he lets out a battle cry, "Let's go!" What do the players on the bench do? They pop up, throw their hands in the air and try to keep one another from rushing on the court. They want to be out there because they are so excited.

That's what you can do with the image of the promised warrior. Jesus' triumph isn't dunking a basketball. His triumph is his boot on the throat of your sin. Then he turns to you, sitting on the bench and says, "Let's go!" And during lent, we pop up and we want in on the fight. Jesus says, "You know those half-truths you've been telling, fight that. Do you know how you are hard to get along with? Fight that. You know your selfishness, your temptation, your sin? Fight it. Let's go!" Friends Jesus has forgiven your sin. He's won the battle for heaven. Now fight with him, not because you're trying to earn heaven, but because he is our promised warrior.

Amen.