

Be the Hunter, Not the Prey / COB / 02.22.15

Introduction

[Movie clip from *The Last of the Mohicans*]

- † [Slide 1: Elk] That was a movie clip from *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which Daniel Day-Lewis engages in a high speed chase after the deer before he shoots it. That's not how we hunt today, is it? No, we hunt by hiding and then enticing the game to come to us. We are such a lazy society!

- † Friday, almost twenty of us were at the Wild Game and Fish Dinner, hosted by two battalions of the Christian Service Brigade, our Battalion 8005, and our brothers from Stillwaters Presbyterian Church.
 - Those of you who were there, what was your favorite food? Right about when Michael had an amorphous mound of some jelly substance, one of the Joshes found buckshot in their food, so we joked that as the British drink gunpowder tea, we eat buckshot Jello!
 - I ate neither dessert nor buckshot, but I did eat various venison and elk dishes, and all were good. LeeAnn is more adventurous with food, so she ate rabbit and dove as well. I'm sure if I was desperate, I would eat dove, but it just sounds funny to me. These birds hang out on my back porch, they are friends of sorts with me and my tiger cat, so I held off on eating one.

- † I was even more impressed with the presentations I heard. Last year, we hired professionals to come talk about hunting and fishing, but this year, we heard from men we know.
 - We were treated to a wonderful story with photos about an elk hunt and then another about deep sea fishing. Elk are monstrously big! They are too magnificent for me to shoot; they are too big for me to want to pack out their meat through the wooded mountains. So I was not encouraged to go elk hunting or tuna fishing, but I enjoyed both of these narratives very much.
 - Then one of the lieutenants of the other battalion, Jeff, got up and talked about his uncle, who recently died in a hunting accident. Jeff had two themes. One was gun safety, and he admitted that most experienced hunters start to get a little negligent about it, because they get so comfortable with their guns and their experience, that they start to take safety for granted.
 - His second theme was his relief at knowing his uncle had accepted Christ in faith, so the result of the tragic accident was his uncle arriving in Heaven. It was a great talk by a man who is not in paid ministry, is not a gifted evangelist or even a gifted speaker. He is just like you, but he is determined to minister in the gospel mission of Jesus Christ, and people like that can make an eternal difference during their lives.

- † [Slide 2: Fish] With almost twenty of you at this supper, I suppose it would be unfair for me to simply give you again the talk I gave Friday night. But can I tell the others my first fishing story? Would that be ok?
 - I first went fishing when I was in high school. A friend of my father's took me out into Sarasota Bay. We were fishing for snapper or speckled trout, I can't remember, but I do remember Walt caught some good sized fish. The fish I caught, Walt kept throwing back into the water, and he called it a "lady fish." I was really embarrassed. I didn't know Walt very well and I didn't know the Spanish hogfish actually was called "lady fish" in Florida, so I thought Walt was mocking me, like I had caught a "girlie fish," instead of a man's fish. That was my first experience with fishing.

- † I have never gone hunting in the traditional sense. I liked stalking other children through the woods when I was a kid and as an adult I worked as a bill collector, which I thought of as hunting people.
- But let's face it, while I would like to be more of an outdoorsman, my idea of camping is to hike all day and then find a three star hotel; and while I respect those of you who are good at these sports, my strength is more in hunting for meaning in the biblical text.
 - This week, I researched all the passages about hunting and fishing. We could discuss Jesus telling Peter and Andrew that he would transform them from fishermen to fishers of men; in a couple of months we will get to the end of John and have to figure out what it means that after a fruitless day of fishing, Jesus helped the apostles catch 153 fish with one net.
 - But for today, I want to talk with you about something different: not about you as a hunter or fisher, but about you as the prey.

† **[Slide 3: 1 Peter 5.8]** **1 Peter 5.8 NLT: Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.**

- Does it seem strange to you that the apostle Peter wrote that the devil hunts people? Many today don't believe the devil is real. Yet every New Testament author asserts the reality of the devil or his demons, and I found reference to them in twenty-two of the twenty-seven New Testament books. They are real and active in the church age.
- The Bible says the devil, also known as Satan, and his demon army are fallen angels, who have rebelled against God and now seek to control the earth. The Bible tells us how they go about this, and we can easily see evidence of their work in life.

† **[Slide 4: Hardships]** For one thing, the Bible shows Satan and demons attacking people directly.

- **Revelation 2.10 NLT: "Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you."**
- Jesus talked about demons giving people physical or mental problems. The apostle Paul said Satan prevented his missions team from getting back to the city of Thessalonica.
- We see in scripture that they can bring about thefts, burning of our homes, even death. How would you react if tragedy struck in your life?
- I had a hard week. Some things happened that emotionally upset me; I had a few sleepless nights; my work computer stopped working. None of this was really tragic; I made it through, I pressed on, but by Thursday morning, I was having a Job moment, where I was looking to the Heavens and shouting to God that I could use a little more help. What if instead my house had burned down or LeeAnn had died, would I stay on the top line as I dealt with that?

† **[Slide 5: tempt]** Some might, but a more successful technique Satan and demons use is temptation.

- In **Luke 22.31**, Jesus told his apostles that **Satan** was about to **sift each** of them **like wheat**.
- This is so easy for demons, because we all have weaknesses. For you, it might be drugs or cigarettes, chocolate or eating more than you need. Maybe it is lust or pride or money.

- Whatever it is, what is evil can find a way to thrust it in front of you. Someone at the party puts a drink into the alcoholic's hand and it seems awkward not to sip it; pornography streams right into your home, for free, in privacy. You will be tempted somehow.
- And most of us lack the self-discipline to successfully resist, in part because we have spent years developing bad thought patterns and behavioral habits by giving in to our whims and temptations. Can you honestly say that you could withstand every possible temptation?

† **[Slide 6: deception]** A third primary technique of Satan and demons is deception.

- **Revelation 12.9 NLT: "Satan [is] the one deceiving the whole world..."**
- Sometimes this is direct, like when Satan deceived David into doing something wrong or deceived Judas Iscariot into betraying Jesus; sometimes it comes through false teachers in the church or through sinfully pleasing propaganda in our television shows.
- I have said before that I would bet that every person in this room is deceived about something important related to God. You might deny that to yourself, but how would you know? By the very nature of deception, if you are deceived you will not know it!

† **[Slide 7: resist]** Fortunately, the Bible teaches us how to defend ourselves against such attacks.

- **James 4.7-8 NLT: "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you."**
- We see from this and similar passages that we are to resist evil, but we do so by depending on God, for our spiritual enemies are supernatural and we are not, they are stronger than we are, so we do resist, but we resist with God's empowerment.

† **[Slide 8: Ephesians 6.10-18]** The Bible teaches how we can resist evil with God's empowerment. Let's read today's key passage:

- **Ephesians 6.10-18 NLT: A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. [Slide 9: armor] Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.**
- **[Slide 10: armor]** When we discussed this in our battalion council ring, I was very impressed with the young men's observations. They easily identified the ways the listed parts of armor could defend us against the attacks of evil. Let's see if we can do the same.
- The attacks we face are temptation [including distraction], deception [including accusation, or negative thoughts], and hardships in life. Our armor consists of truth, righteousness, peace from the gospel, faith, salvation, God's Word, persistent prayer, and Holy Spirit empowerment. How does this armor help us defend against these attacks?

- † Let's start with truth and righteousness. If you decide today that these will characterize you, that you will be known for truth and righteousness, that you will reflect God's character, how could that help you stand firm against attack?
 - At the least, they will empower us to resist temptation, to resist walking in the world on the bottom line instead of with God on the top line. Righteousness might contribute to how we handle setbacks in life; we'll talk more about that. *[Truth of God's Word comes later.]*

- † Why does knowing the gospel bring you peace? Accepting the gospel brings you peace with God, which brings you assurance of your eternal salvation and your place in God's family, which brings you inner peace.
 - How can that peace and our salvation help us defend against attack? We can know our identity in Christ, as someone God has set apart for his purposes; we can know our value and validation in Christ, as someone God loves, has declared righteous, and has adopted into his family; we can know our purpose given by Christ to reflect God's character and represent him here; and we can experience peace that comes only from God, so that nothing that happens in our lives can shake our confidence in our value or destiny.
 - Thus, we can resist temptation, because we know we are righteous, holy, children of God, and we are experiencing purification in the sanctification process, which makes us stronger and more like Christ. We can resist a lot of deception and accusation, because we know how God looks at us and that he loves us, so we can defend against all the negative thoughts about ourselves or God. And even if tragedy hits, we know about God's righteousness and the grace and mercy he has shown us, so we remain dependent on him, obedient to him, trusting in him, and thanking him, despite our pain.

- † How can faith help us? Faith will help us endure on the top line with hope even during our hardest times. In that faith is based on truth, faith can help us fight off deceptions, especially the negative thoughts about God or ourselves. And faith can help us persevere against temptation, because we want to walk with Christ, not with the devil.

- † How does God's Word in scripture help us? God's revelation clarifies truth and so dispels all deceptions. If we knew God's Word well, we could never be deceived by the enemy. God's Word also can exhort us to do the right thing and resist temptation. This is why memorizing scripture is so valuable: if, when you are tempted, you start hearing scripture in your head, that can seriously help you resist the temptation and do the right thing. Also, God's Word prepares us theologically for hardship, so that we do not go off the rails and weaken in faith or walk when hard times come.

- † We should we persistently pray? Somehow, prayer does make a difference, God uses it in some way to effect a better outcome. Also, prayer brings us a sense of intimacy with God, which reassures us that even in hard times we are not alone, and he will see us through no matter how bleak it looks. So even tragedy cannot weaken us to the point of being vulnerable to temptation or deception.

- † All this is empowerment by the Holy Spirit, if we will avail ourselves of it. The Holy Spirit lives inside us, he is always available to us, you have a broadband, FIOS or Xfinity, connection to God that never breaks down. So you always can know God is listening to you, is aware and active in your situation, and is ready to help you stand firm in faith and obedience to resist evil and stand for Christ.

- † Before we move on, I want to leave you with a couple of key thoughts. First, you have to put this armor on. If you want victory over temptation, to defend yourself against deception, and prepare yourself for the hard times we all will suffer, you have to put on the armor of God.
 - And you have to put it on before the crisis hits. In Florida, when a hurricane is coming, we put shutters on our windows. You have to do this before the storm hits, else you are trying to manipulate twenty-four square feet of wood in high winds, and more likely to contribute to the damage than defend against it. If you are tempted or deceived or otherwise attacked before you are ready, you will fall.
 - To stand firm, you have to put on the armor every day when you first get up. You have to decide right then that you will be cloaked in truth and righteousness, that you will seek God's empowerment in faith. Remember Jeff's uncle who got shot himself dead? Plenty of mature Christians, even pastors, get negligent about the armor of God and end up falling to the attacks of Satan and his demons. To stand firm, you must consciously put the armor on every day.
 - And every day you have to pursue the training God says will develop you into a strong Christian warrior. No hunter or fisher became an expert without learning and gaining experience; the same is true for those who become expert in resisting evil and standing firm for Christ.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 11: 2 Corinthians 4.4]** In 2 Corinthians 4.4 we see the worst kind of deception [NLT]: **“Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.”**
 - Other passages reveal that all of us were once enemies of God who were spiritually dead in sin, and thus even unknowingly obeying the will of Satan and demons, though we thought we were going our own way.
 - **[Slide 12: Ephesians 2.1-6]** Let me read you one more passage, Ephesians 2.1-6 NLT: **Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil-- the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.**
- † **[Slide 13: respond]** Now I am going to give you an opportunity to respond to what you have heard. Maybe you have never put your faith in Jesus, never asked him for help and forgiveness. Maybe you have done that before, but you have been living in the ways of the world, inadvertently supporting the work of Satan instead of the work of Christ. Maybe you have been walking in the light with Christ, but you want to plead with God to continue empowering you for victory over sin and evil. Please close your eyes as we reflect and pray about what we have heard.
 - Pray for believers to stand firm; for young believers to submit to Christ and become strong; for seekers to come to faith in Christ and thus start to grow and stand firm.