

The Widow and the Orphan

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 30, 2025
PASSAGES	Isaiah 1; Psalm 18; Ephesians 6; Luke 4
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:57:31 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The armor Paul hands the church in Ephesians 6 is not new equipment. It is what God himself put on in Isaiah 59, when he looked at injustice and found no one willing to step in. Which means caring for the widow and the orphan is not an ethical add-on to the Christian life — it is imitation of the Father, in his strength, and it is worship.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation are God's own gear before they are ours. Paul was not being poetic at the end of Ephesians; he was quoting Isaiah almost word for word.
- ◆ Our real enemies are never the people in front of us. That is hardest to remember precisely when someone is yelling at you.
- ◆ God arms himself for battle when he sees no one interceding. He does not wait for a coalition.
- ◆ When God flexes about his own greatness in Deuteronomy 10, the boast is that he takes no bribe, defends the fatherless, protects the widow and loves the sojourner.
- ◆ Isaiah 1 says the worship of people whose hands are full of blood is a burden God is weary of carrying. Correcting oppression is not adjacent to worship; it is the thing being asked for.
- ◆ At Nain, the town was ready to fight for the widow. They simply could not fight the way Jesus could. That is the shape of every battle we are enlisted into.
- ◆ Spiritual warfare is not only prayers of deliverance. It is also putting on God's gear and getting involved in what he cares about.

- ◆ This is not a tally of good deeds that triggers something. Our hope is in Christ, not in a critical mass of kindness.

► 0:58:08

Matt admitted up front that he was attempting an unusual combination — our great warrior God who readies himself for battle, and the widow and the orphan, the people most often unseen. Elodia had opened the service on the same note: God sees the lonely, the ostracized, the powerless. By the end it was clear the two halves were never two topics.

One more word on the Great Commission

► 0:59:10

Having finished John and then spent two Sundays on the Great Commission, Matt snuck in one more note, because it sets up everything that follows. The Commission is not a deadline project handed to the church on delegated authority to complete on Christ's behalf while he steps away. It is his own project. He is the seeker and the saver of the lost, he was given all authority in heaven and on earth, and he still has it. The passages that stress God being *with* us carry a particular sense: God is accomplishing the great act, and he lets us help — which is a source of dignity and honor. One of the things he asks of us is baptism, and a Baptism Sunday is coming this summer, water slide and all: we are baptized because Jesus asked us to be, because he was, and because it confesses that we follow him and belong to him.

1. Whose armor is it?

► 1:01:26

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

EPHESIANS 6:10-12 ↗

We have human opponents, Matt said, but our actual enemies are not human — they are spiritual beings with dark intent, aimed primarily against God, the last of them being death. “That’s hard to remember when someone’s yelling at you or bothering you a lot. That person is not your enemy.” Then the gear itself: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of readiness from the gospel of

peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer at all times (Ephesians 6:14–18). Spiritual weapons for spiritual problems, and serious ones.

► 1:04:39

Then the turn that carried the message. Isaiah 59 is prophetic literature about God seeing injustice and finding nobody doing anything about it.

“The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”

ISAIAH 59:15–17 ↗

“Where have we seen that before?” Matt asked. The breastplate of righteousness. The helmet of salvation. “That’s heavy metal. Come on.” Paul was not jazzing up the end of Ephesians so the imagery would land on throw pillows; as a well-trained first-century Jew who knew the Old Testament far better than we do, he was quoting. When we battle Ephesians 6 style, we are wearing God’s stuff.

2. The same gear, on his anointed

► 1:07:03

The pattern repeats. Isaiah 11 promises a shoot from the stump of Jesse, a king from David’s line on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests — and it tells you how he judges before it tells you how he is dressed.

“With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth... Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”

ISAIAH 11:4–5 ↗

► 1:09:25

David sings the same thing in [Psalm 18:31–35](#): the God who equipped him with strength, trained his hands for war so his arms could bend a bow of bronze — “that’s a flex” — and gave him the shield of his salvation. So: in Isaiah 59 God fights like a mighty warrior; in Isaiah 11 the Messiah fights in the Spirit and power of God, wearing God’s gear; in Psalm 18 the anointed king is girded the same way. Which raises the question the rest of the message answers. What sort of battle is this?

3. What our warrior God fights for

► [1:11:26](#)

Isaiah already told us: judgment for the wicked, justice for the meek. And the specifics are relentless.

“You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry.”

EXODUS 22:22-23 ↗

Matt’s image for what this makes of Ephesians 6: it is not armor God handed over and walked away from, it is “a child wearing his dad’s samurai stuff.” Mimicry. We are in God’s fight, wearing God’s things.

► [1:12:36](#)

Deuteronomy [10:17-18](#) stacks the titles — God of gods, Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God — and Matt loved the hype. “This is not Prince Ali, fabulous he, gold camels, watch me flex a bunch of stupid stuff. Our great God, when he’s talking about his might and power, this is how he flexes: I don’t take bribes. I defend the fatherless. I protect the widow. I love the sojourner.”

► [1:14:01](#)

“Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity.”

PSALM 68:5-6 ↗

Then [Isaiah 1:13-17](#), where God says your new moons and appointed feasts have become a burden he is weary of bearing, and he will hide his eyes from your many prayers, because your hands are full of blood. The remedy is not more religion: learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. Matt filled in why these two keep appearing together — a father and a husband held a literal, legal, protective role, and without them a household was open to exploitation. God hates that. [Zechariah 7:9-10](#) says it again; so does [Psalm 146:7-9](#).

4. Beyond ethics — this is worship

► [1:16:17](#)

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

JAMES 1:27 ↗

James, Matt noted, is plainly using *religious* as a compliment, whatever the twentieth century did to the word. And here is the main point of the morning: the church does not defend the poor, the widow, the orphan and the sojourner in order to be ethical. Remember whose armor we are wearing. This is imitation of our great Father, which makes it worship — the same logic as the Great Commission, done not without him but with him, and not in the major role but the minor one, following along behind.

5. A battle scene at Nain

► 1:18:33

In [Luke 4:17–21](#) Jesus takes the scroll of Isaiah and reads that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind — and then sits down. He is the promised one of Isaiah 11, wearing the belt of righteousness, fighting God’s own war. Luke 7 shows what that looks like in the field.

► 1:19:50

A dead man is being carried out of the town gate — the only son of his mother, and she a widow. Matt sat in the tragedy rather than rushing it: her husband, whose God-given role was to protect the household, had died, and what comfort remained was a son who could stand for her legally and be there for her. Now he is dead too, and she is dependent on her community.

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”

LUKE 7:13–15 ↗

The crowd’s verdict was that a great prophet had arisen and God had visited his people — and they were right on both counts, Matt said, not only because of the miracle but because this is exactly the kind of thing God does. The town had come out prepared to fight for her. They simply could not fight the way Jesus could.

► 1:22:04

Which is why Paul gives the church instructions rather than sentiment. 1 Timothy 5:3–5 tells families with the means to care for their own — not as a put-down, Matt was careful to say, but because God loves that kind of thing — and reserves the church’s protection for the widow who is “left all alone.” The woman at Nain with no backup at all: that is who needs the church family.

6. Plastic swords

► [1:23:56](#)

“I don’t think spiritual warfare is just about barking at the devil,” Matt said. It is prayers for deliverance, yes — lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil — “but you know what else it’s all about? Wearing God’s gear and getting involved in the stuff he cares about.” He pointed to how Mandy frames Hope’s foster and adopt ministry at their family events: they are not pursuing morality or social justice or whatever you want to call it. Jesus is Lord, he is the focus, and these things are offered to his honor. “We are not merely nice folks chapel.”

And there is no scoreboard. There is no critical mass of good deeds that triggers Christ’s return. Our hope is in him — the seeker and savior of the lost, the transformer of broken people, the builder of families who places the lonely in homes and rebuilds the ancient ruins. “We kind of get our plastic sword out and follow him into battle.”

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

[COLOSSIANS 3:17](#) ↗

Care for the widow and the orphan offered that way is a thanks offering — a peace offering, a joyful act of worship, doing the kind of thing he is all about.

What happened next

► [1:26:56](#)

Matt was a sentence from praying when Peter asked for the microphone — “Look, this is Hope Chapel. You can’t get this anywhere else.” Peter told of a season when his business and his health were both under pressure, and of sensing the Lord say not to let it go: *fight for these guys, and see them delivered*. He fought, asking God for wisdom and for kindness toward the clients he was fighting for, and the accounts held; then new ones came. His addition to the message was worth the interruption: taking care of the oppressed is not only our offering to God, it is God’s invitation into intimacy, because that is

where he already is. He said Hope has a prophetic destiny in this — a church that celebrates the people the world would overlook, because a body loving those people reflects the heart of God. He closed by praying for the lion who roars on behalf of the weak to unite the room's hearts to fear God's name, and had the congregation roar with him.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Ephesians 6:10–12
- Ephesians 6:14–18
- Isaiah 59:15–17
- Isaiah 11:4–5
- Psalm 18:31–35
- Exodus 22:22–23
- Deuteronomy 10:17–18
- Psalm 68:5–6
- Isaiah 1:13–17
- Zechariah 7:9–10
- Psalm 146:7–9
- James 1:27
- Luke 4:17–21
- Luke 7:13–15
- 1 Timothy 5:3–5
- Colossians 3:17

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Ephesians 6 says our enemies are not flesh and blood. Who have you been treating as the enemy lately, and what would change if you stopped?
2. Isaiah 59 has God arming himself because there was no one to intercede. Where do you see something like that going unaddressed around you right now?
3. Matt said this is imitation of the Father, not ethics — “a child wearing his dad’s samurai stuff.” How does that change the way you think about serving the vulnerable?
4. The town at Nain came out ready to fight for the widow and could not do what Jesus did. What does it look like to keep showing up anyway, knowing he does the heavy lifting?
5. Who is the widow, the orphan or the sojourner in reach of your life, and what is one thing you will actually do for them this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcMfW6Nx2B0&t=3451s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.