24 December 2023 St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Vienna, VA

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"The Son Who Fights for Us"
Text: Isaiah 7:10-14; Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20;
1 John 4:7-16; Titus 2:11-14

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

There was about to be a war. One enemy would have been enough, but now two had joined forces. They were on the doorstep but had not yet launched their attack. The people saw it and were afraid. What would they do? What destruction awaited them? What atrocities? The future was uncertain and seemed gloomy indeed. These were dark days.

So the Lord sent His prophet, Isaiah, to the king, King Ahaz, to say to him: ***do not be afraid***. They will not win. This will come to nothing. And this is the sign the Lord will give you of this: ***the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel***. Immanuel, which means, *God with us*. Which, honestly, doesn't seem like much assurance, like much of a sign, when the enemy is at the gates and ready to pounce! But *God with us* is no small thing. And this, too: God knew that what seemed like a big deal to Judah at that time was just a small skirmish in the grand scheme of things. There was a much greater battle being waged, and a far greater foe. **And this virgin-born son would fight it**.

And as bad and frightening as it seemed at that time to Judah and her king, it was going to get worse, *darker*. For next to come up against Judah would be a bigger, stronger, viler, and meaner nation which would swamp them like a river overflowing its banks, impossible to hold back. But then Isaiah goes on to say, ***the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone***. And again, Isaiah points *to a child* to bring hope: ***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given***. And again, a child against a nation doesn't seem like good odds! But there was not only a much *greater* battle being waged here, but also *a different kind* of battle, for which *this child* was perfectly suited. **This son who would fight for us.**

Well, more transpired after that. Years went by, some good, some not so good. The people of God had their ups and downs. Kingdoms and nations rose and fell, the promised son was remembered by some and forgotten by others. Finally, Rome emerged for a time. And as with any nation and kingdom, it takes money to run and administer them. And so ***a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be***

taxed. That forced Joseph and his espoused wife Mary to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem. And while there, a child was born. But not just any child, a son. And not just any son, the Son, the promised Son, the virgin-born Son. A birth which didn't seem like much; which was, in fact, hardly noticed. There wasn't even ***room for them in the inn***. But born was **the Son who would fight for us**.

But while not noticed on earth, this birth was noticed in the heavens, by the angels. And they told some shepherds. Shepherds who were fighting their own battles, against predators and thieves who were after their sheep. To them, the angels said: *the Son is born*. And this is the sign for you: you ***shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger***. And yet again, not much of a sign! quite frankly, the angel host was much more impressive! But the angels were not the sign, the sign of God's love, the sign of God's might, the sign of God's faithfulness - the Son was. So the shepherds went, and saw **the Son who would fight to them**.

After that, more years went by. Joseph would die, as would Caesar Augustus, replaced by Tiberius Caesar. There were good days and bad days. The people of God had their ups and downs. The promised son was remembered by some and forgotten by others. Until one day, **the Son who would fight for us**, *He started fighting!* He fought blindness, He fought deafness, He fought against leprosy, He fought the demons, He fought false teachers. He rescued sinners and outcasts. He prepared for each battle *with prayer*. *This was a far different kind of battle than anyone had ever seen before!* So they didn't understand it. Though Isaiah and others had said this is how this battle would be waged, they didn't get it, and so fought against the Son who was fighting for us! Finally, ultimately, hanging Him on a cross. A day of deep darkness. *Evil* darkness.

Yet so different was the fight of this Son that this, too, was part of it! Dying to win. So He laid down His life. It wasn't taken from Him. They *couldn't* take it from Him. He laid it down, to win. To conquer the real enemy who has come up against us. The enemy who is not on the doorstep, ready to pounce, but who has infiltrated our hearts and minds and lives. So to defeat this enemy, satan, sin, and death, Jesus laid down His life, to atone for our sin, break death and the grave, and strip satan of his power. And He has! The resurrection proved it. **The Son fought for us**, and won.

And the God who sent prophets and angels speak of His birth, now sends apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to do the same. To proclaim to shepherds, parents, programmers, doctors, nurses, students, waitresses, and all people, that the Son, the promised Son, the virgin-born Son, **the Son who fought for us**, the Son of God, has come. And that He is ***the propitiation***, that is, the atonement, the sacrifice, for our sins. That we now have life in Him. Life that is safe from the enemy. Life that, though interrupted by death, will last forever. A life purified and set free.

Now, a lot of years have gone by since those days. Much has transpired in our world.

There has been good, and a lot of not good. You've had ups and downs. Kingdoms and nations have risen and fallen. The promised Son was remembered by some and forgotten by others. There are wars going on, and enemies ready to pounce. The internet has opened a whole new front in this war, and the enemies there, though unseen, are quite real. And then there are your own personal battles and struggles, trials and pains. And tonight, as we look to the manger, maybe those old, old thoughts come back: *harumph! Not much against such deep darkness and mighty foes*. Yeah, tonight feels good and joyful, but what about tomorrow, and the next day, and the next year?

But there in the manger is not just a child, but a son. And not just a son, but the Son, **the Son who fought for you** and won. The child who came for you, died for you, rose for you, ascended for you, and now is here for you, baptizing you, absolving you, teaching you, feeding you, **fighting for you**. To be a light in the darkness of this world. A light of hope. A light of promise. That no matter how deep the darkness gets for you, it cannot have you. Whatever you are fighting, you do not fight alone. You belong to Him. You do now, and you will forever.

And now that you have seen Him, and known Him, and eat His body and drink His blood, and live in Him as He lives in you, you are like the shepherds, who ***returned glorifying and praising God***. That is, telling of all that He has done. You now do the same. For God sends not only apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but now also you, men and women, to make known at home and abroad this **Son who fought for you**. That with words of grace, lives of love, and patience endurance, others know and believe, too. That ***to us a child is born, to us a son is given***. **A Son who fought for us** and won.

And His name . . . *is Jesus*.