

Fall Series: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Series Text: Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

Sermon #7: “The Mighty Avengers - Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners”

Scriptures: Philippians 4:1-9 and Ephesians 2:1-10

Sermon Text: Luke 22:26 Jesus said, “But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant.”

Source: Drawing from *Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith*.

Theme: Christian unity, working together as a team, understanding one another, welcoming saints and sinners, doing our part.

Wednesday Blurbs: The newest boxoffice superhero hit is *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. While a great movie, it also captures how working together with a constantly changing group of people who come with different backgrounds and different life experiences can be challenging. We can relate to this! Time and time again, however, The Mighty Avengers find a way to work together to save the world. As we strive to live out heroic lives by linking up with others we struggle to understand and agree with, God gives us the grace and wisdom necessary to work together for God’s good in our torn world. Come to find out how you can receive this grace and wisdom, too!

Gathering Song: “The Ascension” - Sanctify

Welcome - Pastor David

Worship Songs: Better is One Day - Sanctify
Mighty to Save
Bind us Together

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kid’s Invited to Kid’s Church - Andrew

Missions Moment - Parker & Megan Ask

-Prayer for Parker and Megan & all God’s people around the world - David

-Invitation to Action Pack -Write notes, then stay after and stuff boxes

-Invitation to Discussion with Parker & Megan - Coffee Shop

Joining of New Members - David

Harold & Teresa Berg

Offering: “Give Thanks” - Sanctify (David introduces offering)

Prayer Time - Pastor David

Video Clip: “The AVENGERS - We're A TimeBomb [Stark vs Rogers] HD” (3:15 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7cF6vMfhR4

Play only until 1:32, where Stark says, “Everything special about you came out of a bottle.”

PP#1: *Image of two Avengers fighting each other, like Iron Man vs Thor*

Wow, there were some pretty heavy insults flying there. Captain America to Iron Man “The only thing you fight for is yourself. You better stop pretending to be a hero.” Iron Man to Captain America, “You’re a laboratory experiment. Everything special about you came out of a bottle.” These are superheroes, and they’re arguing, fighting among themselves! They’re supposed to be on the same team, the same side. But they can’t get along. The mightiest superheroes in the Marvel universe, and they can’t even be in the same room together. Thor to Banner, the Hulk, “You cause chaos!” Banner, the Hulk, says it best when he asks, “What are we, a team? No! We’re a chemical mixture that makes chaos! We’re a time bomb!”

PP#2: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith” “The Mighty Avengers - Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners” Luke 22:26 Jesus said, “But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant.”

“Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith” “The Mighty Avengers - Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners” Luke 22:26 Jesus said, “But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant.”

PP#3: *Cover from Avengers #1 (September 1963)*

Stan Lee created The Mighty Avengers in 1963 when he pulled together what he dubbed, “earth’s mightiest super-heroes!” But they didn’t come together by choice. They were forced to join forces to fight enemies too strong for any of them on their own. They need to be a team, but they are plagued by all of their problems and faults, and especially by each of their need to be in charge and do things his way. Right from the first issue, the members of the Avengers fight each other.

PP#4: *Comic image from Avengers #2, where Hulk says they all hated him, and leaves.*

And then, in the second issue, all the rest gang up on Hulk. In the end, he says, “I never suspected how much each of you hated me, deep down! I could tell by the way you fought me...by the remarks you made!” And he leaves.

PP#5: *Image of various Avengers down through the years, perhaps Avengers vol. 3, #1 (Feb. 1998)*

And there is another continual feature of The Mighty Avengers. It’s a fluid team, with interchanging heroes. Individual heroes come, fight with them for awhile, and then go back to their own lives, and others take their place. But the idea is, that once an Avenger, always an Avenger. So, they can be called up any time to serve when they’re needed.

And that’s one of the major sources of their conflict! The Avengers each may have super powers, but they are continually learning to get along with new people, each with strengths, weaknesses, and issues. They have to work with very different people all the time, and they have to get along enough to get the job done!

PP#6: Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners**1. Working with those not like you**

Learning to work with those not like you. You know, this is something that you and I need to learn as God's children, too. The Avengers is a bit like the church, isn't it? I mean, we're all blessed with special gifts and talents, we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us. And God calls us to fight for truth, justice, and the way of Jesus, in a world fraught with conflict, problems, and trouble. The problems are way too big for each of us. But God has a plan, a plan He started with the very first Christians. Each of us on our own can only do so much, but when we come together, we can do amazing things! We can change the world!

The key, however, is that when we come together, we have to join together as a team, called the church. Sounds so simple: get along. But when we are honest with ourselves, we admit that this is far harder to do than we usually want to do. You see, people at church don't always think like I do. They don't always value what I value. We often disagree about what we do, when we do it, how we do it. People at church, we each have our own issues. Some irritating people don't ever seem to change! We don't always behave well. We can say mean things. The church is full of people not like you. And it's hard work just to stay together. It's far easier to back out. We focus on something that really irks us, or don't forgive something rude that someone says, or see decisions made that we don't agree with. And we justify not staying by how we are wounded, or how we are going to go find a church where I can agree more, or where those things don't happen.

But you know what? Biblically, we are called to assemble! For God, it's not so much if we feel this is a good fit, as it is God's charge to assemble and get along. In the Garden of Gethsemane, just before Jesus is arrested, He prays that His followers would be one, just as He and the Father are one. Think about that. That's what's on Jesus mind as He is facing death. That's how important it is!

PP#7: Philippians 4:1-9 (CEB)

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord.

Loved ones, 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to an agreement in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I'm also asking you, loyal friend, to help these women who have struggled together with me in the ministry of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the scroll of life.

In Philippians 4, Paul is talking to the Christians in a town in Greece called Philippi. And being a good Christian church, everyone there got along! Actually, not so much! So, there were two women, Euodia (ee-Ō-dia) and Syntyche (soon tOO kee), who were evidently in a pretty major disagreement. So much so, that news got to Paul, hundreds of miles away...in a world without instant communications!

In the middle of his letter to all the church, Paul calls them out. "Therefore, my brothers and sisters whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord. Loved ones, I urge Euodia (ee-Ō-dia) and I urge Syntyche (soon tOO kee) to come to an agreement in the Lord. Yes, and I'm also asking you, loyal friend, to help these women who have struggled together with me in the ministry of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the scroll of life."

Not only are these two arguing women Christians, Paul says that they were leaders in his ministry! These are church leaders, whose argument reached Paul's ears. You know, the church wasn't really all that perfect in the Bible, now was it? But Paul tells them to make up!

Do you think they did? Would you? If you were mad at someone in church, and a pastor or church leader told you to go make up, would you? It's far easier to justify and be mad, isn't it? Paul then generalizes that calling to how all Christians ought to treat everyone.

PP#8: Philippians 4:1-9 (CEB)

4 Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! 5 Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. 6 Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. 7 Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

He continues, "Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! Let your gentleness show *in your treatment of all people.*" Are you known for your gentleness? Why should we? Because, "The Lord is near." So, I suppose that means He's seeing how we are behaving. It might also mean that He's near by to help us resolve that conflict. Besides, don't worry. God's got it under control! "Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus."

The super power of the Holy Spirit within you will protect your heart and mind, with all of their unhelpful feelings and thoughts, and curb them towards God's way.

What does living heroically look like? How do I draw upon that Holy Spirit power within me? Well, Paul tells us!

PP#9: Philippians 4:1-9 (CEB)

8 From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. 9 Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.

"From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you."

That means, to get along and work together, you have to see what is good, not what is wrong. You have to see what that annoying person does right, not what is irritating. You have to frame that other person as your ally, not as your problem. It's a willful decision of your heart and mind. It is choosing to focus on what is good. And you will find that your heart and mind fall in place, and you can get along. In fact, you will find a friend, and be far better off! That's living heroically for Jesus!

In the comic books, over and over again, the Avengers, whoever happens to be a part of the team, learn to see what is valuable in each other, and focus on that. They give each other grace and forgiveness, and they each learn to give up some of their selfishness to let others have their way, too. It's not easy, but it makes them mighty!

In the new box office smash hit this summer, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, the android Ultron is the ultimate enemy. He might even be stronger than all the Avengers together. And he plans to keep them from working together. For if he can do that, they are not much of a threat. Take a look at this trailer where Ultron tells Black Widow how he plans to defeat the Avengers.

Video Clip: “Avengers: Age of Ultron Official TV Spot "From the Inside" (2015) - Marvel HD”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkII4GXiQNA (0:31 minutes)

PP#10: *Image of the Avengers all circled with their backs to each other, working together.*

“I’m going to tear you apart...from the inside!” He is going to have them fight each other. And this is true with the church. God’s people can be our own worst enemy. When we are struggling to get along, it hurts our witness to the rest of the world, and it keeps us so busy fighting each other that we don’t do much good! The demonic doesn’t have to fight us directly. All he has to do is keep stirring us up against each other. Same difference. We’re rendered impotent!

Who do you need to get along better with? Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to see as an ally, a friend, a child of God? Each of us needs to live into the hero God calls us to be.

In the movie, the heroes argue. They are so different. They don’t like each other. They don’t trust each other. How are they ever going to defeat Ultron? Captain America gives the answer.

Video Clip: “Avengers: Age of Ultron Movie Clip #1 - We'll Beat It Together (2015) - Avengers Sequel HD” (0:56 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=oH1eOp7Ip5c

PP#11: *Image from the movie where all the Avengers burst through the forest together.*

Together. The famous battle cry of the Avengers is “Avengers Assemble!” Come together. Put aside your differences. Work as a team! This cry can be a calling for us. We, too, need to lay aside our grievances, our quarrels, our conflicts of personalities, and be one, as Jesus and the Father are one. There’s work to be done! Christians, assemble!

PP#12: *Trick-or-Treaters dressed up like Marvel Avenger superheroes*

It’s Halloween this Saturday. Halloween is a Christian holiday about saints and sinners. Did you know Halloween is a Christian holiday? Don’t let the world take it over, or ruin it! It’s a holy day that celebrates that God always triumphs over evil, and that God turns sinners into saints. That’s why we have to be so careful how we treat those people who are so mean to us. They are future saints that God can redeem! We don’t want to push them away, we want to welcome them in. That way God can bring transformation to them, and to us!

The original Avengers were Hulk, Thor, Iron Man, and Ant Man. But they each disbursed, and new members came in. Most famous is Captain America. He became the leader of the second wave of Avengers. Who were they? They were *the enemies that the first set of Avengers had fought!* Hawkeye, Quicksilver, and the Scarlet Witch. That’s right! And throughout the Avenger’s history, they continued to integrate dozens of former villains into their team.

PP#13: Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners

1. Working with those not like you
2. Making room for future saints

You know, that'll preach! One of the most profound teachings of the Christian faith is that God is a God of second chances. Sinful people are redeemable! God not only accepts us, but uses us as well! He puts us on His team! All through the Bible we see stories about that. Moses, the one with the 10 Commandments, was a murderer! So was the great King David, who committed adultery with a married woman, and then had her husband knocked off! Rahab was a prostitute. The Paul who wrote Philippians, had started out persecuting and arresting Christians. God put all these on His team. That means there's room for you on God's team. That means there's room for THEM, too!

PP#14: Ephesians 2:1-10

1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. 3 At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

Paul remembers this when he is writing Ephesians 2. He points Christians to their own history, how we each were enemies of God, and how we were turned from sinners into saints. That's how we must view those people we just don't like!

Ephesians 2:1, "At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else."

PP#15: Ephesians 2:1-10

4-5 However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that He has for us. You are saved by God's grace! ...

Don't forget how you needed grace...and still need grace! Extend that grace to others! Verse four, "However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that He has for us. You are saved by God's grace!"

PP#16: Ephesians 2:1-10

8 You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. 9 It's not something you did that you can be proud of. 10 Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

We are saved not because we were good. We were saved because we were messy, and sinful, and selfish. It was a gift to us! Verse 8, “You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.”

We need to extend that grace to others. This is a super power that we have that can change others! In the movie, Hawkeye, now a good guy, is protecting the Scarlet Witch, who up until this point has been their enemy. He tells her that things are going crazy, but she can fight for good. In fact, she can become an Avenger. It’s a choice she gets to make. Take a look.

Video Clip: “Avengers: Age of Ultron Movie CLIP - You're An Avenger (2015) Jeremy Renner Movie HD” (1:05 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nwb8k95l-h4

PP#17: *Image from google search on “Avengers Assemble!” but change to “Christians assemble!”*

When the battle heats up, she comes out fighting for good, and she becomes an Avenger.

Living heroically for Jesus means to extend that grace to others. It’s to invite them in. It’s to include them, work together with them, even when they are not perfect, and have a lot to learn. It means to be gracious with them, and to help them learn the way of Jesus, just as we continue to learn the way ourselves. God wants none to perish. Every life is precious. The walls of our church building are not there to keep sinners out, but to be a home where all are welcome! When God adds new and different people to our groups, we are strengthened. New gifts are added and new perspectives enhance our lives. We get to work together!

There is a big world in need of a lot of grace. There’s work to be done. God has let out the call to His people. Christians, assemble!

Amen.

Closing Song: “Now Thank We All Our God” - Sanctify

Announcement & Benediction - David

- Action Pack after worship
- Parker & Megan Ask after worship
- Bazaar on Oct. 31.
- Highway cleanup on Oct. 31.
- Trunk-or-Treat on Oct. 31.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OCT. 25, 2015

Fall Series: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Sermon #7: “The Mighty Avengers - Assembling a Community of Saints and Sinners”

Scriptures: Philippians 4:1-9 and Ephesians 2:1-10

Opening prayer

Introductions: Introduce yourself & share about someone who used to be an enemy but is now a friend

Read Philippians 4:1-9

1. Verses 1-3. Identify as much as you can about Euodia & Syntyche. Do the same for Clement.

2. Do faithful Christians ever disagree and even argue? Why? Are you like that?

3. Verses 4-5. How should you treat all people? Why?

4. Verses 6-7. How does having God near help you treat others better?

5. Verses 8-9. How does this command help you be gentle to all people?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

6. Verses 1-3. Why might it help you behave as a better Christian when you remember the sins from which God has saved you?

7. Verses 4-5. How might remembering that you did nothing to deserve God’s salvation help you treat others that you find difficult?

8. Verses 8-10. We were created to do good things. Like what?

9. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?