

Isaiah 42:13 – Ash Wednesday – February 26, 2020
Series: The Son of God Goes Forth to War
Theme: The Promised Warrior
New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church – Shoreview, MN
Pastor Joel J. Gawrisch

Originally written by Jim Steinman and Dean Pitchford for the movie *Footloose* in 1984, Bonnie Tyler recorded it for the movie and later released the track as part of a 1986 album. The official title is *Holding out for a Hero*, but is better known as (and if your of a certain age, you can probably hear her singing it in your mind)...it is better known as *I Need a Hero*.

*Where have all the good men gone
And where are all the gods?
Where's the streetwise Hercules to fight the
rising odds?
Isn't there a white knight upon a fiery steed?
Late at night I toss and I turn
And I dream of what I need*

*I need a hero
I'm holding out for a hero 'til the end of the night
He's gotta be strong
And he's gotta be fast
And he's gotta be fresh from the fight
I need a hero
I'm holding out for a hero 'til the morning light
He's gotta be sure
And it's gotta be soon
And he's gotta be larger than life!*

5 minutes that I'll never get back are the 5 minutes I spent watching the music video for this song. But so that you don't have to waste your time...Bonnie Tyler finds herself in a country cabin set on fire by black-clad cowboys. Backed up by a choir of angels and singing for her hero to come to her rescue, the bad guys move in. Of course, in he rides, the white-clad cowboy on his trusty steed, to her rescue.

Yet, while I probably wasted 5 minutes watching the video, I was certainly not alone. 40 million other people watched it, too, on YouTube. In fact, the song's continued popularity is rather remarkable. It

reached America's top 40 in 1985, and then nearly every other Western nation's top 40 from 1985 and into 1986. Since then, it has been remade 6 times and has been used in 8 additional feature films, not to mention TV series and countless other amateur videos. The bottom line: the song resonates with people.

As we begin our Lenten journey to the cross and empty tomb, we take the time to reflect on our sinfulness, to acknowledge our need for savior, to meditate on God's assurance of salvation, and to resolve to lead new and holy lives out of thankfulness for all that he has done for us in Jesus, our *unlikely* hero.

Because let's be honest, the description, and resulting visuals, of Jesus' passion, his suffering and death at the hands of sinners, does not line up with Bonnie Tyler's description of a hero, much less the rest of the world's expectations. They want a victory for their hero, not an execution.

Think about: The reason why superhero stories and movies are so popular is because deep down, we all know that we need good to triumph over evil if there is to be any meaning in this life, and we're hoping against hope that we can somehow latch onto a little bit of the hero's victory for ourselves, even if only for a few moments.

*He's gotta be strong
And he's gotta be fast
And he's gotta be larger than life!*

The problem is, when the world looks to Jesus, they don't see the hero that they seek: they see humility, not bravado; they see weakness, not strength; they see gentleness, not brashness; they see someone who cramps their style, not someone who sets it.

This year's Lenten theme helps us to see Jesus from a little different perspective. Oh, we will still see Jesus as humble, gentle, submissive to the will of God, but we will

also see him as hero, a true hero – The Son of God who goes forth to War – a champion, to rescue you and me.

And let's face it, we need rescuing. Beginning with our first parents, Adam and Eve, the fallen human race has had a desperate need for salvation, a salvation from that something sinister which lies deep within us.

It's the same defect that infects us all. No medical procedures can remove it. A surgeon's knife cannot cut it out. There is no drug that will eradicate it. Radiation can't burn it out.

The Bible simply calls it sin...and it is not just a disease, it is our enemy...an enemy of the worst kind...lying deep with us to bring us down and destroy us. And if that isn't bad enough, it has enemy relatives who come along with it—the plotting, ruthless devil; the corrupt, damaged world; even, and especially, death itself.

And there can be no peace treaty with this deadly enemy, no negotiations, no compromise. It is an enemy seeking our total destruction. No, a war must be waged and, try as we may, we can't win it. As the Apostle Paul admitted, ***What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Romans 7:24).***

A poignant question, yet over the centuries, a question to which God has time and again provided the answer through his Word. Yes, through evangelists, and apostles, and prophets like Isaiah, they make it clear that God is a promise maker, a warrior giver, and a victory winner for his precious people. He is a God who gives hope—and here it is: He tells you and me that a CHAMPION marches out against our enemy. This warrior HERO is of the highest order . . . the greatest in world history...with a special birth (Isaiah 7:14)...a world ruler (Isaiah 9:6)...God's special servant for a judgment of righteousness to the entire

unrighteous world (Isaiah 42:1). Yet his deep battle wounds (Isaiah 53:5) and innocent self-sacrifice result in the destruction of our inner enemy, the ultimate healing of our evil disease. This is he who conquered death, threw Satan into hell, and did it all ***with a shout*** (Isaiah 42:13), ***It is finished!*** (John 19:30)

Yes, it's safe to say (or sing, as the case may be), *I need a hero*. But we don't need to hope that someone comes along who meets our description. No, we have been blessed with God's hero, a warrior for souls, a champion not just for the ages, but for eternity. This Lenten season, As the Son of God Goes Forth to War, join him on his journey and rejoice in his victory. It is for certain, it is forever, and it is for you.

From the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 42 (:13):
With a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.