

WEEKLY SERMON

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Take the Sword of the Spirit

As I write this the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated rapidly since the Taliban's takeover of the capital city Kabul and news reports are showing thousands of people desperately fleeing for their lives.

Women and girls are fearful of their future and for the freedoms and rights that have been hard won in study, education and careers. The scenes are upsetting and unsettling as we consider the impact not only on Afghan lives but on international security.

This comes just days after the tragic shootings in Plymouth and the needless loss of life there; fuelled by misogynistic ideologies. Quite rightly, questions on gun control are now being asked.

We have not been free from natural disaster either: the earthquake and tropical storm in Haiti is devastating, while soaring temperatures and raging forest fires elsewhere are horrifically becoming the norm and a consequence of the global Climate Change Emergency.

This can all seem too much and we do need to ask ourselves and reflect on what part we, as individuals as well as nations, have contributed to these situations.

It does almost feel like the signs of the end of the age of ... "wars and rumours of wars...nation will rise against nation...kingdom against kingdom...famines and earthquakes." (*Matthew 24:6-7*)

However, Paul reminds us that the struggle is ... "not against the enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (*Ephesians 6:12*)

We do face evil in its many forms, not just what humankind perpetrates, but also the reality of the powers of darkness; that powerful army of Satan who is out to try and defeat Christ's church, of the unseen world in the heavenly realms. There is a cosmic battle raging.

As Christians we know that on the cross Jesus defeated Satan, but we are still living in the in-between times until Jesus comes again in glory to end evil for good.

In the meantime, Paul urges us to put on our armour to withstand the blows and to take "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (*Ephesians 6:17*)

We fight the battle protected and saved by Christ but also armed with His mighty word praying "... in the spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication." (*Ephesians 6:18*).
Lord have mercy, Amen.

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