

Waging War in the Everyday

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[0 : 00] A second thing is, I thought I'd tell you why we have two Bible readings now every week. My view is that we should follow Paul's injunction to Timothy, and that is to pay close attention to the public reading of Scripture.

So it's all very well to hear the Scriptures explained, but we have the Bible in two Testaments, and so one of the first things I said to the staff is, every service I want to have two Bible readings, because it's very important for us to be hearing God's Word, not only explained, but hearing God's Word read, and you can understand it for yourself.

Now, I'll let you into a little clue. Here's an exercise you can do every week. When I set the Bible readings, and I suspect John will be the same, there is always some link between the two. You can work it out. See if you can spot it.

Today, that's your exercise. See if you can spot, as we move through Luke, what the connection was with Exodus 15. With that said, let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your kindness to us.

Thank you that you give us your Word. Thank you that your Word in Scripture points us toward your Word in the Gospel, which points us toward your Word, which is your Son.

[1 : 12] Father, we pray today that as we look at the Scriptures together, that the Scriptures might do what you ordained them to do. Point us toward your Son, and to his glory, and to his honour, and that you might drive us through the work of your Spirit to respond to you appropriately and well.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, friends, I want you to think just a little bit about your week. How has your week been this week? Now, I want you to reflect back on it.

You know, just think about your week that has passed. Think about it. Think about perhaps the work that you did, the people that you met, the places that you went, the shows that you watched on TV, the meals that you ate, the news that you heard about the world, or about other people that you know, the news that you heard perhaps about friends and family, the issues that you struggled with, you know, the high points of your week, and the low points, the things that made you laugh, and perhaps the things that made you cry if you did, the things that weighed you down, and the things that buoyed you up.

You see, each of us has had, haven't we, a week full of events, a week full of incidents, some very, very significant, some very, very mundane. But for most of us, I guess, the week has been full of the ordinary, the humdrum.

One or two of us may have experienced the extraordinary. One or two of us, two people here tonight, will experience the extraordinary next weekend. One or two of us here may have had a life-changing experience.

[2 : 48] Most of us, though, that won't have been the case, would it? Most of us, it's just been an ordinary week, much like any other week that has gone by. Now, but whether things have been good or bad, extraordinary or ordinary, the things that have filled this week have been, you know, stuff of ordinary weeks.

The things that just happen. The things that really, well, they never seem to change, do they? This is life, isn't it? This is reality. Or is it? Now, that's the question I want to ask tonight and address tonight.

I want you to ask yourself and I want me to ask myself some serious questions about what is it that is really real about reality.

And to do this, we're going to have a look at a few verses from Luke chapter 4. And in Luke chapter 4, the verses we read earlier on from 31 to 44, we read about a series of incidents in the early ministry of Jesus.

In other words, we see Jesus come across people who are just caught in life. We see him deal with their problems. We see him deal with their difficulties. And as he does, he gives us a glimpse of reality as God sees it.

[4 : 0 0] So we are going to find out how God sees reality this evening. So come with me and let's see what happens. Let's see what God has to teach us from this great part of his word tonight.

Now, the first incident I want to look at occurs in verses, chapter 4, verses 33 through to 35. Let me read them to you. In the synagogue, there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon and he cried out with a loud voice, let us alone.

What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. The Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him and said, Be silent.

It had come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done any harm. So there's incident number one. Now, it's a straightforward story, isn't it?

Here's a man who's in an extreme situation in life. You see, he's possessed by this evil spirit. And where no one else recognizes just who really, who Jesus really is, this evil spirit does.

[5 : 0 5] And Jesus orders the spirit to be quiet and orders the spirit to exit the man and the spirit listens and the man is returned to well-being. And that's the first incident. The rescue of a man bound by Satan.

Hardly the ordinary is it, but nevertheless, an incident in life. The second incident is really a series of incidents. And in verses 38 to 39, we see Jesus in the house of his disciple, Simon Peter.

His mother-in-law is sick and Jesus sees her sickness. He speaks to her sickness as though it were a person. And immediately, she is healed and returns to health and she returns to the normal everyday tasks of life.

And then in verses 40 to 42, we see people streaming to Jesus with all sorts of ailments. And again, he heals them. With some, he casts out demons, but no matter what it is, the people are restored to health.

Now, I want you to reflect on what we have read in these passages, what we have seen here. Reflect on the incidents portrayed. After all, the situations here are really not that unusual, are they?

[6 : 1 6] I mean, people in every age get sick. We have a prayer circle that goes around this church and I reckon there's not a day goes past where someone isn't on that list. And I don't get an email about someone being sick.

Sickness is normal. It's ordinary. People in every age find themselves beset by sickness. And let me say, they also find themselves beset by evil and the demonic.

We may not always recognize that it's the evil, it's evil and the demonic that is going on, but what happens here is a normal part of every life. People get sick. People are beset by evil and the demonic.

However, the incidents here are slightly different, aren't they? After all, the incidents here are the ones in which humans really feel themselves very much out of control.

These are incidents where they feel so, so helpless. And at these points, Jesus is able to cut in and to reveal the true nature of the human predicament. And the true nature of the human situation is that human beings are captive to great and evil forces from which they need an enormous deliverance.

[7 : 25] Let me explain by getting you to think back to the garden in Genesis 2 and 3. Remember, do you remember the garden? Remember the events that happened there? Remember how God creates the world in chapter 1?

He creates the world and He creates humans in it and it is good. And remember how in chapter 2 the serpent intervenes into that good world and He tempts Adam and Eve. And remember how Adam and Eve just cave in to His temptation.

Remember that as a result their world was full of two forces that would tear at their existence. From now on being human for them would mean being caught in this world.

On the one hand they had a world that was full of the presence of a serpent who would have some sort of power over them and on the other hand their world was full of the presence of their own sinfulness and that became the reality of their world.

They knew God was in this world. It was a world created by God but that world now had two elements in it that were aggressively opposed to God and to goodness.

[8 : 23] The serpent and now their own sinfulness as well. That friends is the reality of the world that we live in isn't it? It is a place where humans are caught in a supernatural conflict involving God the devil and their own sinfulness.

their own nature. Now I reckon in the last week we've largely ignored that fact. That is we've ignored that that is really the reality. Nevertheless let me tell you friends this is the cold hard reality of our world caught between these forces that wage war upon us.

For the most part we just ignore it but reality in this world is what happens under the surface or behind the scenes or if you like in the heavenly places the spiritual places behind the scenes of our world there is a war going on.

There is a cosmic conflict involving God and Satan and the forces of evil and our own nature. We saw a glimpse of that reality in the temptation of Jesus just a couple of weeks ago remember him caught as Satan tempted him.

We notice it in verse 34 in our passage today. Notice what the demon says to Jesus he speaks about us in other words he speaks about other forces of evil and he recognizes that Jesus has come to engage in battle with them.

[9 : 48] He has come to a fight that will be to the death he has come to destroy evil. With that in mind let's return to Jesus and have just a little closer look at what he does in these supernatural encounters.

First look at how Jesus wages war. First he encounters the people he sees them caught in this conflict then he sees them oppressed he observes that they are captives to sin and to Satan and to the effects of sin in the world and having seen that he takes active help doesn't he to free them and release them and he does this in accord with his calling from God and he reminds us in verses 18 and 19 that he's been anointed by God to do what?

To proclaim freedom to prisoners recovery of sight from the blind release to the oppressed and the year of the Lord's favour that's what he is here for having said that I want you to notice how he goes about bringing release to the oppressed did you notice it the quotation from Isaiah that we looked at last week gives us just a few hints as to how he would do it it tells us that it would involve speaking and preaching and proclaiming and look at how Jesus does this look at the verses verse 32 Jesus speaks with authority verse 35 he rebukes verse 36 he gives utterance and commands verse 39 he rebukes verse 41 he rebukes again in verse 43 he proclaims in verse 44 he preaches now what do you notice about the sorts of words that I'm isolating here that are used in these verses what sort of words are they why don't you take another look at it and what sort of actions do the words that I've spoken describe have another look see what sort of words are they what actions are being performed did you see it there in verse 32

Jesus speaks with authority in verse 35 he rebukes in verse 36 he gives utterance and commands in verse 39 he rebukes again in verse 43 he proclaims in verse 44 he preaches now look at verse 43 let me read it to you again I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also for I was sent for this purpose can you see what he's saying he's saying he's speaking plainly and he's saying look and in the context of this passage it's very clear he's saying I am doing battle with the evil one that's what I've been doing with all of these things that I've been engaged in I am in this world to do battle and the battle I'm engaged in is a spiritual one against the world forces of darkness and evil the battle is being waged everywhere and anywhere but its focus is where human beings it's on human existence and in that battle do you see the weapons that Jesus wields he has two weapons the first weapon we see him use is the one that I reiterated through this passage the word of God you see the second weapon he will use happens in the second half of Luke and we won't dwell on it tonight it is his own life that is the ultimate weapon that he will use but here this the weapon that he's using here is the sword of the word of God and everywhere he goes he wields this sword he speaks and Satan cowers he rebukes and demons flee his authoritative word is uttered and illness vanishes the point is this friends pay attention to it and grasp it the reality is in our world that there is a

God and the reality is that that God is king and he has a kingdom and he intends to reign in that kingdom he has a kingdom and he intends to put an end to all usurpers of that kingdom whether they be human or satanic this is why he has come he has come to destroy the devil's work works he has come to proclaim that God and God alone is king and to bring in God's kingdom now with that in mind I want to turn to you with you to a passage and get you to turn with me in Revelation 19 so turn in your Bibles to Revelation 19 11 to 16 it's very easy to find I'm not going to give you page numbers because if you can't work it out you're in trouble really right at the end of the Bible you just turn back about two or three pages and you should be there Revelation 19 verse 11 to 16 and I want you to grasp the picture here then I saw heaven opened and there was a white horse its rider is called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war his eyes are like a flame of fire on his head are many diadems and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself and he is clothed with a robe dipped in blood and his name is called the word of God and the armies of heaven wearing fine linen white and pure were following him on white horses and from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron and he will tread down the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the almighty and on his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed king of kings and lord of lords there is a picture of

[15 : 37] Jesus now if anyone tells you there's a difference between the old and the new testament about how God is presented they haven't been reading their new testament have they for this is like the God of the old testament revelation 19 gives a picture of Jesus and it tells us how to view the ministry of Jesus and did you notice the imagery he is seated on this great white horse symbolic of victory and conquering he is called faithful and true he is a judge he is a king he's engaged in war and he himself it appears has been wounded you can see this because his robe is dipped in blood perhaps not the blood of others but even his own blood and his name is the word of God and he wages war with his mouth and out of his mouth come weapons with which he strikes the enemies of God this is how God sees Jesus not as some weakly long haired blue eyed English gentleman who simply goes around healing people who are physically ill no no God sees in his son a warrior a man of war engaging the enemy on the front lines of battle wielding the sword of the word of God speaking the words of

God and sending the enemies of God running in all directions receiving in his body all the worst mortal wounds that the enemy can offer a prince waging war on behalf of his king for the sake of God's people friends don't be fooled when you read or listen to these stories in Luke's gospel these are not just nice stories of Jesus helping out Simon's mother-in-law these are stories of God waging war this is a cosmic conflict and the stakes are high now I want you to now return to where we started this sermon we started this sermon by reflecting on our week now there are two ways to think about this your last week the first way is to think about the world and your place in it in the usual way that is well this sort of string of haphazard events good and bad occur to me this week only the most extreme we think involve God in some way most of it's about meeting friends having coffee enjoying the created order doing study sleeping watching television or a

DVD or whatever it is that you do the second way to think about this world and yourself is in a supernatural way that is to view yourself and the incidents that have happened to you this week as incidents that involve you as God views them you see God considers that we are involved in a struggle you and I are engaged in a struggle it's not a struggle against human forces but against the authorities and the powers of this dark world it is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places behind the everyday events and incidents of life in this world there is a conflict going on that is of cosmic proportions friends Satan is doing his work Satan this very day this very minute this very second is at work capturing human hearts sowing evil trying to snatch the word out of your hearts as we sit here he is trying to do this he is blinding people to God and reality he is trying to put the shutters over our faces our eyes over our ears to bind us to reality the evidence of his activity and of the activity of human evil in our world is overwhelming isn't it selfishness greed illness the demonic brutality abuse rage enmity strife unfortunately evidence of his activity in our own evil is also so overwhelming isn't it our selfishness greed lust covetousness addictive behavior anger rage malice evil motives careless words coarse language brutality bullying sexual sin it's all there and all of it has its focus on sin and us we're in a world you see friends we're opposing forces we are we're in the crosshairs of opposing forces now my experience is that we act in three ways in the face of this first we say oh look

I'm just going to ignore this and I think this is the default position we'll simply get on with life we'll take the good and the bad in our stride we'll simply accept this is the way life is second we apply band-aids that is we can observe the effects of this supernatural conflict and do what we can to alleviate it as a nation we can send troops and money to needy places in the world as individuals we can write out checks or go as we've done to help people who have been terribly devastated by bushfires we can help the poor and the impoverished we can lobby and work with governments to try and ensure justice and equity now friends those efforts are not wasted and they are incredibly necessary and they are good and right and appropriate for us as Christians to be involved in you see they rightly spring from having seen God's great love and care for us in Jesus and we want to express that for others we want to be like Jesus in the world they are appropriate and good things for Christians to be involved in however let me say they really don't address the depth of the issue at stake and this is the third option isn't it it's to address the real issue and to do that is to engage in war it is to oppose the devil it is to speak into the world about the fact that there is a devil and he's set against the evil one against the

God himself so the evil one is set against God now friends engaging in war let me say it's not something to do lightly is it to engage in war you need to do some careful thinking you need much thought and you need to be prepared for the enemy that you're engaging with in combat fortunately God has given us the equipment we need for the conflict he has amply supplied us with everything we need to engage in this conflict first he has given us the death of his son Jesus has died our sin is forgiven Satan is vanquished his hold over humans and over us is crippled second God has given us his word and this word is the gospel that proclaims the great kingship of Jesus Christ and the benefit of his death resurrection and ascension and this word is great news for us and it is great news for our world it proclaims the battle won on the cross it announces that all that is left is the mopping up which will be finished on the last day and is assured so if this is so then how do we actually go about this conflict in the everyday what do we do well we determine that our lives will not be led by our own desires and our wishes or by satan's desires and his wishes instead our lives will be led by

[23 : 18] God's word and strengthened by God's spirit we rely on Christ's death as being a death for us we rely on his word as being our guide and instruction for life our decisions will be guided by these things our relationships will be guided by these things no friends if this is the case you and I are going to have to be diligent aren't we if we aren't engaging this conflict appropriately we're going to need to be diligent constantly exposing us ourselves to the great news of Jesus and to God's written word we need to take as many opportunities as we can to hear and read God's word friends that's why in this church we spend so much time focusing on the Bible why we don't do it because we're intellectual and we love reading books you can come home with me and see my library and you'll see I love reading books and I live in a family that loves reading books but that's not why we come together on Sunday and read this book we don't do it because we merely find it interesting we do it because it's a way to equip the saints of God for life in the world you see what we are doing here tonight equips you to walk out into the everyday tomorrow that's what this is for that is what we are doing it means God it means the reason we speak the word of God here tonight is to protect the saints from the wiles of the evil one this is the very first thing we do we submit our lives and our attitudes and our world to the word of God and we live in the light of that word listen to the psalmist I love this psalm psalm 119 speaking about this I've just selected some verses from psalm 119 how can young people keep their way pure by guarding it according to your word with my whole heart I seek you don't let me stray from your commandments

I treasure your word in my heart that I may not sin against you your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path friends this is the first thing we can do as we engage in this conflict this ordinary week that we will go out into saturate our lives with the word of God the second thing to do is to take as many opportunities as we can to speak God's word to others we will do this in boldness but we and with sensitivity like God we won't force people to listen but we will urge them to listen we'll let our speech be gracious seasoned as it were with salt by all means we'll take up the sword of the spirit covering all our actions with prayer we'll be followers of the Lord Jesus we'll live as he did being determined that the effects of sin and Satan are recognized and dealt with this is the mark of the people of God friends a people at war you are at war as you walk out from here tonight a people who live under the word of God a people who wage war by the word of

God a people of the gospel which is the word of God a people who love Jesus who is the word of God incarnate a people who follow Jesus and who say I'm going to shape my life and my warfare after my master this is who we are the people of God let us pray father please make us people like your son there is a people who are determined that the evil one will not overcome good with evil father please help us to take up the sword of your spirit which is your word that is the word that speaks to us about Jesus the word that speaks the gospel the word that is contained in scripture and please father help us to be wary of the wiles of the evil one help us not to be sucked in by him thank you that in Christ you have protected us from him please help us to go to you to depend upon you to live by your word as your people we pray this in

Jesus name Amen