

A time for war...



*"...a time for war and a time for peace"
Ecclesiastes 3.8*

...and a time for peace

"A time for war and a time for peace". These words come from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. It's one of the books referred to as wisdom literature, where the writer grapples with the question of finding meaning in life. Taken on its own the book doesn't give a complete answer. That's why we need what Paul referred to as the "whole counsel of God".

But yes, there is a time for war and now is one them. Many commentators have used the language of warfare in relation to our current situation with Covid-19. We face an invisible enemy. We will defeat this virus which is attacking us with devastating consequences. We talk about front-line workers. We also talk about heroes – the NHS staff and the inspiring Captain Tom.

It is entirely appropriate and indeed very helpful to use warfare language at this time. It helps us to recognise that for a season at least, life cannot proceed normally. This is an exceptional time requiring sacrifice, courage and resolution.

Christians, of course, should be used to the language of conflict. Paul reminded the Ephesians that, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil. He testified to Timothy that he had fought the good fight. In the book of Revelation, the promise to those who overcome is that they will be rewarded.

This is a conflict in which we all have a part to play. The reason is simple. Anyone who gets infected can potentially transmit that infection to others and there's a possibility that they could die.

So, if we are at war, what is our best weapon? In a word, it is LOVE. Jesus taught us to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbours as ourselves. The best way to show love to others at this time is to refrain from doing anything that could possibly increase the likelihood of spreading this virus. That will mean different things for different people. For some, loving our neighbour will mean taking all possible precautions and then going out into the community to perform essential work. For others it will mean helping someone vulnerable to avoid putting themselves at risk by helping out practically. For others, it will mean staying at home and resisting the temptation to break the guidelines. For yet others it will mean doing things that directly or indirectly help people to cope with the severe challenge of self-isolation or staying at home. For families cooped up together for hours on end with the potential for friction and conflict, it means cutting each other some slack and making an effort to understand their feelings. Everyone has a part to play.

The encouraging fact is that there is a great deal of love being shown by a great many people in this season of warfare. May God help us to keep going and may he strengthen all our collective efforts and help us to press through to victory.

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