Sermon: **And pray … that I may speak boldly and make known the gospel’s secret** (Ephesians 6.19)

The Church is perceived as reactionary on issues like acceptance of abortion, homosexuality.
Without commenting on these, I declare that we are being attacked by greater enemies.

Why should we shoot at an enemy 200m in front when we’re about to be overwhelmed by one from behind?

There are some assumptions of society that need challenging, for which we need some armour to declare!

[1] Materialism.

1st modern assumption is not just that life is about using/getting more stuff, but failure to produce more, consume more and make a profit, is somehow wrong.

Where is that in the Bible? Did not Jesus say: **Look at the birds flying around: they do not sow seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them**. (Mt 6.26)

Why do we think we need more towels, a replacement set of pans, yet another expensive holiday in Bali?

We all get sucked in, but lack of materialism is not wrong! So let’s fight the battle!

Watch a set of adverts, saying no to each, and imagining how life would then be. Repeat exercise! TEXT.

[2] Freedom

2nd modern assumption is that you can do what you want as long as you don’t hurt anyone, or do illegality.

One main reason for guns in USA is that the constitution gives freedom to have them; restriction is wrong!

Giving *carte blanche* freedom forgets that humans are sinful and will use freedom for their own ends.

(St Augustine) ***Eternal God, who are the light of the minds that know you, the joy of the hearts that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you; grant us so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom, in Jesus Christ our Lord.***

(528 WOV George Matheson) ***Make me a captive, Lord and then I shall be free***

(Covenant Service)***In love we seek to do your perfect will.*** What do all these truly mean?

Most scary essay title for a child is “your own topic”.

True freedom comes not from an open canvas, but from working within God’s restrictions. TEXT.

[3] The Pursuit of Happiness

Question often asked of me in my early years here is: Are you happy here? Hard to answer, not because I’m unhappy, but that it is not a question I ask myself.
3rd modern assumption is that the goal of life is to be happy. This often means looking after yourself first.

eg Find what you love doing, start taking care of yourself, enjoy life more. These are largely selfish.

Most pursue happiness as their right. However, note (Phil 4.12-13) – being content.

Reality is that happiness is not found in pursuing it, but in helping others.

Hearing others’ problems, giving unexpectedly, saying thanks, going out of your way: result is happiness.

How does all God’s armour help us?

It helps us perceive the wrongness in society, and helps us show an alternative that works. This is not reactionary but ‘proactionary’, not negative but positive. The Gospel is positive. TEXT.