

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME 10TH SEPTEMBER 2023

THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT

Armour is generally something solid, impenetrable, something to protect its wearer from deadly weapons and the dangers of the 'outside' world. Just think of the full body armour of a medieval European knight.

The armour of light, however, is quite the reverse. Instead of shutting its wearers off to protect them from the world, it *brings* light and warmth to the people. It is not armour worn out of fear, it is worn to *give* hope. In Romans 13:11-14, Paul urges us to put on this armour of light because in Christ, we have become creatures of day, creatures of hope. In Christ, the night of sin has passed and what we must now focus on are the 'honourable' deeds of daylight.

The world around us looks very dark and cold indeed. Skyrocketing prices are pushing people across the country quite literally into the cold and dark, as they have to make a choice between eating or heating. Many children and young adults in education more than ever need concrete support to cover basic needs like food.

In addition, young people are facing a mental health crisis of hitherto unknown proportions. According to the charity Young Minds, 1 in 6 young people have a probable mental health problem. An NHS survey in 2022 found that children with probable mental health problems felt less safe at schools and were less likely to enjoy learning than those without a mental health disorder. Add to this the uncertainty caused by the war in Ukraine and the worsening climate catastrophe (expressed in conditions such as climate anxiety and ecological grief), and it is no surprise that neither the present nor the future look like green pastures.

In Exodus 12, God is preparing the Israelites to leave Egypt, the country of their enslavement. The ultimate goal is the 'land of milk and honey', a place where they are meant to be free, meant to be able to be themselves, meant to flourish. According to the biblical narrative their journey will last 40 years (a whole generation) during which they wander through the desert, a place of (metaphorically speaking) chaos and entanglement in sin.

If we take seriously that we are indeed a people of light and hope in Christ, how can we bring this light and hope to the children and young adults in education? Even if it does take us a whole generation or more to resolve the problems we are facing now, let us make a start on this Education Sunday to think about ways in which we can journey together with the children and young adults in education, so they can find hope, light and a place in which they can flourish.

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