

## Column

If the devil did not exist, he would have to be invented. Not only do we see his hand at work in the lives of individuals, in society, but even in churches.

This past week I watched a two-part documentary on a church in Knightdale, N.C., in which this fiend from the lower regions had moved in and had been doing his worst. The story told was one that could not be made up.

It seems a new minister had come in who systematically set about getting rid of those who had been there for decades. He did so in preparation for what could only be described as a hostile takeover.

Numerous people were interviewed who told how they had been disenfranchised and their heart broken as they saw the choir disbanded, ministries that were bearing fruit closed down and many of their friends leaving. When they brought their concerns to the new minister, they reported that he would smile and continue with his wrecking operation.

As it turned out, behind this plot was a sinister figure by the name of J.D. Greear. Greear headed another church in the same region. The goal of both Greear and the minister who had come in, according to the documentary, was to seize the church's buildings and assets and to re-found it under the auspices of Greear's mega-church.

Footage of congregational meetings were shown in which the devil, if he could be seen, was certainly occupying the seat of special honor up front smiling.

Happily, the knavish plot of Satan's human agents was found out and foiled. Those who had been forced out were able to return and begin to rebuild. Greear's patsy left.

If this were an isolated event at a particular church and of a particular denomination, it would be sad, but it is not. Why do you suppose Satan is up to so much mischief, not just in this church but in so many others?

After all, Christians of all stripes believe Jesus won a great victory on the cross. The price of sin was paid. Satan was defeated; his power broken. The prison house of death into which people had been filing since Adam was charged and opened.

On the cross, the prophecy found in Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled: the Seed of Woman (Jesus) bruised (wielded a mortal blow to) the serpent's head. That being the case, why is there so much darkness in the world? Why did Satan show up in all his finery at this North Carolina church?

Could it be because he knows his days are numbered and like a wounded animal is lashing out at his Conqueror and those who are on His side?

How should Jesus' followers respond to the devil's fury? Four suggestions.

First, they must not be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). That is, they should not be surprised at opposition and must be on guard against his attacks in their own lives and in the Christian fellowship.

Secondly, they are to continue to pray that petition in the Lord's Prayer that says "Thy kingdom come . . . on earth as it is in heaven and not lose their nerve.

Thirdly, they are to be out in the world picking up those who have fallen prey to Satan's lies and attacks . . . those who suffer addiction, those whose homes have been wrecked, and those whose churches have been attacked.

Fourthly and most importantly, they are to stay close to the Saviour.

God bless the good people at Knightdale, N.C., and all who fight the good fight against sin, the world and the devil!

*O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may, by thy mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer).

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