



We have in the Bible this whole series of what we call wilderness prophets—of prophets who are either sent to or choose to go to the wilderness and from there they are able to speak truth to power. From there they are able to see the pride and hypocrisy of what is going on in the empire.

In the season of Advent, we come face-to-face with one of these prophets in the form of John the Baptist. He's a strange fellow, eating nothing but locusts and wild honey. But he speaks truth to power—he speaks truth to the occupying Roman Empire. And people flock out to the wilderness to hear him. And he gives some pretty straightforward advice.

He says that whoever has two coats should give one to someone who is in need and that whoever has food should do likewise. When the tax collectors who work for the Roman Empire ask him what they should do he says 'Well, don't take more than what is due to you'. And when the soldiers of the Roman Empire come out and ask him how they should act, he says that they should act justly. People should have listened to John the Baptist, but if you know the whole story you know that he ends up with his head on a platter. The empire never likes to hear the truth.

Thinking about the wilderness prophets and then thinking about our own province of British Columbia, I cannot but think of the protestors in Fairy Creek and the protestors in Wet'suwet'en. Fairy Creek is the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history. Over 1,000 people have been arrested protesting old growth logging. And watching the RCMP, with military-style weapons, descend upon unarmed protestors in Wet'suwet'en, I think to myself, what are we doing Canada?

We used to pride ourselves on being peacekeepers abroad, but it seems that at home, whenever Indigenous people protest, we have to go full-on military. We have much to do beating our swords into ploughshares and making true peace.

And so, in this Advent season, I invite you with me to think about wilderness prophets and to listen, really listen, to what they have to say, so that we can work together for peace, for justice, for reconciliation, for the path forward. Amen.

