Reflection - 2026 Remembrance Sunday

"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

On this day of reflection we look backwards on the service and sacrifice of those who served Canadians and others through the armed forces. Do look at the names on the walls - the many who served, those who died, the whole community deeply affected.

This year, because of the ruptured international peace, security and humanitarian systems in which we now live, I will focus on the future, and slightly amend the parable to:

"*Keep awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour*, or what"

The working consensus that people built during and after World War 2 for an international system of security agreements and human rights was imperfect and incomplete. It was built and operated by imperfect people and nations. Other imperfect people, like me, often emphasized failures in it. BUT - from 1950 to 2020, the average global human life span increased from 46 to 73. This type of imperfection was so much better than the systems of tyranny, force and colonialism that preceded it. That post WW2 system is rupturing around us.

Listen to a story from history: The great Greek historian Thucydides described a negotiation in 416 BC between the representatives of Athens and of Melos, a small independent island in the Aegean Sea. Athens demanded Methos surrender, pay taxes and join the Athenian empire. Methos replied with their position of neutrality, justice and fairness. Athens responded "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must". Methos did not surrender. Athens attacked, killing all the men and enslaving all the women and children. Methos as a community and state disappeared.

In the next 12 years, two other superpowers, Sparta allied with Persia, destroyed Athens. The "winners" lost, the "losers" lost more.

How much sacrifice will we, and much worse our children and grandchildren, be forced to endure to help build the replacement? What are the shared values within Canada and around the world that we can

build around? For the successor to the post WW2 world order will be not wished into place. It will be built, over many years, with sweat and, tragically, some blood and tears. What does our Christianity offer this work?

As I struggled with what answers to offer to this challenge, I realized slowly that the answers I offer are very similar to the answers to other global challenges - for example, climate change. The world has progressed but hasn't exactly aced that challenge. Building a new international order is even more complex, more difficult. Yes.

Strategies like despair/distraction/wishful thinking are even worse. Catastrophically worse is (this was a common saying among boys when I grew up on Vancouver Island) "*Though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil* for I am the biggest, meanest SOB in the valley".

The Christianity that I aspire to calls us to listen, to adapt, to evolve, and to celebrate that everyone is a Child of God. No team 'Good' versus team 'Bad'. The war videos from Ukraine are not distant morality fables - they are tragedies of citizens of Ukraine and Russia, of Methos and Athens, of Cain and Abel.

Christianity requires of us to [from Alcoholics Anonymous] a fearless moral inventory of how well we are expressing the fruits of the spirit: Love; Joy; Peace; Patience; Kindness; Goodness; Faithfulness; Gentleness; Self Control.

This path does not include a purity code. It has marks of a life lived in communion - with others, with Creation, with God. We are more than just us. Re-examine the prayers for today, and look for the calls for communion. Without communion, we crumble from a magnificent whole into random, individual bits, like amoeba under a microscope.

On this, we could talk for hours. Instead, let's act for a lifetime. Live more aware, in communion. Protect and build the local, national and global security and humanitarian system. "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you … Hallelu, Hallelujah*."