

Bible texts

1 John 1 8-10 (Note this is not the Gospel of John but the First Letter of John, later in NT) **8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

excerpt from Luke 12 v. 48 From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

July 5th: The Morning After

July 4th lets us be loud and sometimes silly patriots , celebrating the wonder that is America and the blessing it is that we get to call it home

- The uplifting Declaration “all men are created equal” that changed the world
- The heroes that have kept the dream alive Washington Lincoln Martin Luther King Billy Frank Jr.
- And ranch dressing!

But being a patriot is not just about celebrating

The thing is, after most nights of wild celebration, the morning brings sobering realizations.

The morning after, we remember that being a patriot comes with responsibilities

Last time I spoke about how the church can help save democracy by holding us to a high moral standard

- John Adams: “our Constitution is made for a moral and religious people” and “is wholly inadequate to the government of any other”

Today I want to talk about a patriot’s **responsibility to hold our country to a high standard**

- One high standard would include honestly confronting the mistakes we and our forebears have made and learning from them

Confronting mistakes is hard

- the Japanese refuse to acknowledge the horrors of the comfort women. The Turks refuse to take responsibility for the Armenian genocide

But it can be done

- the Germans have energetically confronted the horrors of the Nazi past
- Our country confronted the mistake of slavery with a civil war where young men put their lives on the line in service of big ideals, a war that took more lives than all our other wars combined, and the happy result of the 13th amendment ending slavery
 - o Actually, the 13th amendment wasn’t easily achieved.
 - o the Senate passed it in April 1864, the House initially did not. At that point, Lincoln took an active role to ensure passage through Congress. He insisted that passage of the 13th Amendment be added to the Republican Party platform for the upcoming 1864 Presidential election. His efforts met with success when the House passed the bill in January 1865

Humans are imperfect, and so their governments are too

- The work of confronting the past may never be done. We should be prepared to be judged harshly by our children and grand children when they judge us by the standards of their day.

A current and very difficult example is considering the experience of the with native peoples in the Pacific NW

- In just a few years the people we honored as “Pioneers” have become reviled as “colonial settlers”
- I have found this change jarring, but it raises the question, **how should we judge** the actions of those who paved the way for us?

I wanted to find objective standards that might be applied to the European experience in the Pacific Northwest I came across Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning, written by an Oxford professor.

- It judged the British Empire by identifying objective standards and applying careful analysis.
- I was not much interested in the British experience, but I found the author’s standards and methods to be a useful place to start with judging the experience here in my home.

Two of the standards were relevant.

- **Was what happened a product of “racism”?**

- The British author defined racism as “a pejorative attitude of a member of one race for all members of another race”
- By that definition, the NW experience was definitely racist
- The Egg and I: “The Coast Indian is squat, bowlegged, swarthy, flat-face, broad-nose, dirty, diseased, ignorant and tricky. There were few exceptions among the many we knew”
- Cultural superiority: what I saw in Calgary . a poem about a tribal member grandfather while in a residential school, singing Peggy Sue but not the songs of his own culture

○

- **Was it based on “the theft of land”?**

- What would “theft” mean when the tribes had no formal legal system for establishing land ownership and the tribes themselves were constantly moving around
- From the Oxford professor: absent legal rights, but a moral right: “one usually ought not to take from other people things in which they have invested their time and energy, or on which

their social life has come to depend, or which they need to survive”

- As a legal matter, tribal leaders did enter into legally binding contracts to clarify ownership (the treaties)
-
- Even if the treaties are “legal” documents, do they mean the land was not stolen?
 - Not fairly negotiated
 - Not honorably enforced

Realistically, **was there a better alternative history?**

- Impossible to imagine that an ambitious and energetic people would just stay away from the NW, and impossible to imagine that the tribes would not engage with and benefit from Canadian and American markets, prosperity, technology

Nevertheless it is hard to deny that something awful happened

And that we have benefited in ways that we did not earn

What is our response?

What do we owe the tribes?

We should start by confronting the facts

- (the land acknowledgment) useful, but only words
- A starting place that makes us think about what went wrong, how we should behave in the future, and what we need to do to make wrong things right
- Reparations? Using money to assuage our guilt. Unsolvable problems. Who should receive? Who should pay?
- Happily we have another way to address the misdeeds of the past.

We can address the misdeeds of the past by living up to the treaties

- The U.S. Constitution recognizes treaties as the “supreme law of the land,” and the treaties remain as vital today as they were 170 years ago.
- Slowly but surely tribes are benefiting as courts recognize their treaty status as sovereign nations
- The courts recognized the tribes rights to have casinos, and tax free gas, liquor, cigarettes

The hunting and gathering right is a very big deal

- I had never heard of these rights until I made a presentation to the Yakama tribal council many years ago
- **Article 5 Excerpt**
"The right of taking fish at usual and accustomed grounds and stations is further secured... together with the privilege of hunting and gathering roots and berries on open and unclaimed lands."
-
- The famous Boldt decision said the tribes were entitled to half the salmon. That was tough enough, but the costs borne by a few, and the division of salmon dwarfed by the growing shortage of salmon to be divided
- State courts have required modification of culverts to restore salmon passage at a cost to the State of as much as \$8 billion

Now comes the very **tough topic of the Snake River dams.**

- 4 dams on the lower Snake River that generate electricity, allowing for barge traffic of wheat, and providing water for irrigation
- But the dams also decimated salmon populations, including chinook, the species famous as being the only major food source for endangered orca whales

That is all true, but I talked last week with a marine biologist who grudgingly offered that, even with the dams removed, it will take decades for the numbers of orca whales to be restored to a healthy number

Tribes argue that their treaty rights are violated when there are no fish to harvest and therefore the dams should come down

Their opponents argue that the dams' role in our clean energy future and their economic benefits are more important than saving a few fish and a few whales

- My Spokane friend called this the “third rail” as it would so damage the people of Eastern WA
- Inslee and Murray created a study that estimated the costs of replacing benefits at \$13 to \$31 billion and that all of that work must be done before the dams come down (and also no proposal for actually doing that)
- So maybe we could just keep the dams but pay the tribes for the right to do so?
- My talk with Paul Ward, Yakama fisheries leader
 - o **“The tribes don’t want money, they want fish”**

I conclude that the dams must come down. The tribes have a legal right that must be honored. A deal’s a deal, and not only a deal when it is in our favor.

This will cost all of us either in the form of tax dollars or in much higher prices for electricity and wheat or in a climate that is warmer because we get power from dirtier sources.

We are not good at paying for things that need to be done. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid,

But paying for things that need to be done is a high standard. Keeping our word when it hurts, that’s a high standard.

That is what we should demand of our beloved country.

It's not easy to be a patriot; On the 4th you get to celebrate. On the 5th you face up to hard truths (“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”)

and hard decisions. (“from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”)

.America is a gift,

May we prove worthy of the gifts we have been given.

God bless America land that I love