

## The misery is tangible; so is the solution

Job 19.23-27a

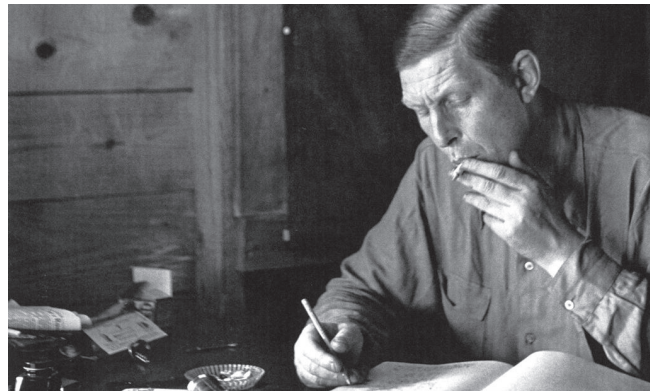
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I think most of us do not like to be reminded of bad things in the past, let alone of bad things in our times.

We have a tendency to create our life, even our mind, as a sort of safe haven, a fortress, to keep all evil away, even the memory of evil things.

The British-American poet W.H. Auden wrote about this on the verge of World War II. In a poem called 'September 1st, 1939', that was ofcourse when Germany invaded Poland, he wrote this:

Faces along the bar  
 Cling to their average day:  
 The lights must never go out,  
 The music must always play,  
 All the conventions conspire  
 To make this fort assume  
 The furniture of home;  
 Lest we should see where we are,  
 Lost in a haunted wood,  
 Children afraid of the night  
 Who have never been happy or good.



Auden calls our defensive methodes against the evil world outside, our 'fort', our castle, and we have made this fortress as comfortable as possible in order to fend of our fears. See no evil, hear no evil.

Do we really want to be reminded of wars in the past? Of the millions who died?

It is good that today we are forced to.

### 1. Real problem

It may not be sweet, attractive, nice, to look evil in the eye. War is evil. Formally, on Remembrance Day we think of the armistice after World War I, tomorrow exactly 101 years ago.

Maybe that distance in time makes it easier to think of the horrors a bit more lightly. After all, we do not do that sort of warfare anymore. Horses, trenches, very tiny airplanes.

But 8,598,009 soldiers died in those four years. 21 million were wounded.

Ahh... but that is so long ago. Yes, but then we had World War II. 25 million soldiers killed. 60 million civilians died, as a result of that gruesome war.

Thank God, since then we have not seen wars on our West European soil. We have enjoyed a long period of peace. Easy to now do as Auden said in his poem, hang at the bar and act as if nothing bad is going on.

We fight our wars at a distance now. In the Middle East, in Afghanistan. In Europe we had - not so long ago - our bloody Balkan War. And Ukraine and Russia are at each other's throat. And there are so many conflicts large and small all over the world.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over [everything] And God blessed them. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1.26-31)



It began so very good, this creation. But look what we made of it. On Remembrance Day we think of the brave men and women who died. But they should not have died. War is evil.

Even our graveyards, where the soldiers lay buried, superficially give the impression of peace. We make sure the places look good, clean, well organised. Almost as if we try to cover up the immensity of what we humans are doing to each other.

God made all humans in his image, in his likeness, but in our wars, we dehumanize the other. An insult to God.

We no longer see the Creator in the eyes of the other, and we justify killing people by branding them as the enemy.

In our wars we, Christians, even kill other Christians, because they happen to be born in that other nation.

Some wars have to be fought, I think. There are times when enemies must be confronted. There are 'Just Wars', wars that can be justified. But we must be very careful with such ideas, because it is clear that usually we think a war is justified when our own nation fights it, while the other party obviously cannot have a just cause.

Nationalism can be dangerous. It is good to love the land we are from, but as Christians, we are part of a transnational organisation. We are part of the Body of Jesus Christ, and in him all nations are welcomed. We love all brothers and sisters.

We humans have made a mess of God's good world. We desecrate our world, God's creation, by exploiting nature instead of managing it well. We desecrate our world with the blood of the people killed.

I am not a pessimist; by nature I always see new options, solutions to problems, a way out. But is there a way out of this rot we are in?

If we are realistic we have to accept the idea, that we, or our children, will see others wars, maybe even in our own lands. That is what history seems to indicate. Every so many years another flare up.

It is so easy to give up all hope. We messed up and we will mess up. And it would be easy to think that God has lost. He saw that all was very good. But it turned out bad, very bad.

## 2. Real solution

But Christians are people of hope. This is not a sort of vague spiritual hope that we escape from this world and go to heaven eventually.

Our Christian hope is spelled out in the Scripture readings of today.

Look at Job. His life was miserable. He had lost it all. He lost his wife and children, his properties, his health. He was on the brink of death. And Job was asking for a Remembrance Service, as it were.

“Oh that my words were written!  
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!  
Oh that with an iron pen and lead  
they were engraved in the rock forever!” (Job 19.23-24)

Job wants people to remember his misery. But also that he had hope. Hope for sitting on a cloud, hoping that his spirit would go to a better place? No.

Job had hope that in this world, on earth, God would make things right again.

I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.  
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,  
yet in my flesh I shall see God,  
whom I shall see for myself,  
and my eyes shall behold. (Job 19.25-26)



That is our Christian hope. Not escape from this world, but that in this world, in our world full of rot, God will make things right again.

When Sadducees - a sect in Judaism that did not believe in a physical resurrection - tried to argue about the resurrection with Jesus, Jesus underlined that one day, the dead will be raised.

Those Sadducees believed that only the first five books of the Old Testament - the five books of Moses - were inspired by God, and so Jesus argued based on a story from one of those five books, from Exodus.

In the story of the burning bush, Jesus argues, God revealed himself to Moses “as the God of Abraham , the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is God not of the dead, but of the living; for in him all of them are alive.” (Luke 20.37-38)

God is our hope. Last week we celebrated that our friends and family who died in Christ are presently with God, alive in Him. And the same is true for all victims of violence.

All who die in Christ today, can be assured that their spirit is safe in the hands of God; today. But they all wait for the moment when they will be re-united with their bodies. To get new, perfect, imperishable bodies.

And when that happens, then finally, God has made all things right again. Then He shows that He is not overwhelmed by the mess we humans make of his world. He has not written us off. He has not written our warlike globe off. Instead, He will restore all things.

Even in the Old Testament, Job was aware of it. ‘I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth.’

We are people of hope. There is a Redeemer, Jesus our Lord. His body, destroyed by the Roman army, was restored. He is the first one, and we will follow.

### 3. What to do

So what to do?

Because we have hope, we can look evil in this world in the eye. We are safe in the hands of God, and He will one day repair all things. He will make you new one day, and that process has already begun. This hope liberates us from being fearful of reality.

We have a Redeemer who has already shown that He is stronger than death. So we are not like the people in Auden’s poem who try to hide for reality.

Lest we should see where we are,  
Lost in a haunted wood,  
Children afraid of the night  
Who have never been happy or good.

We are not afraid to see where we are; we are not lost, because our Lord guides us; we are not afraid; we do find our happiness in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we admit - we are not good. But thank God, we have a Redeemer who forgave our sins. We have been made right with God. No fear in life, no fear in death.

After Paul in his letter to the Thessalonian church, comforted the believers with the certainty that we shall obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ - Paul tells them to stand firm and to hold on to what they had learned from him.



And he prays that God will strengthen them in every good work and word.

That is our proper response in the world we live in. We do not hide, but against fear and despair, we endeavor to act and speak in accordance with the Gospel.

In the midst of this world full of rot, we are called to be a preserving salt.

In the midst of darkness, we are a lighthouse of God.

We are the vanguard of the coming Kingdom of love and peace.

In a world with wars and rumours of wars, we are called to be peacemakers.

In your street where people do not talk to each other, you are called to reconcile.

In your world where so many people are despondent, you are called to represent the hope of new life.

We act and speak in accordance with the future that God has promised us, and that future is ours.

## Conclusion

Let me finish with the prayer of St Francis of Assisi to sum up our faithful attitude in the midst of our world:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.  
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.  
Where there is discord, let me bring union.  
Where there is error, let me bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.  
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.  
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Master, let me not seek as much  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love,  
for it is in giving that one receives,  
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,  
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,  
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

**Amen.**

