

“Cloud of Witnesses”
By Rev. Lucas Bruder de Oliveira
November 9, 2025

Readings:

Hebrews 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- Today is a day of remembrance.
- Silence, flowers, and flags invite us to do something profoundly human: to remember.
 - Remember those who, in times of war, risked or lost their own lives for peace.
 - They are those who did not love war;
 - They fought because peace was threatened.
 - They gave themselves not out of love for violence, but out of love for human dignity, freedom, and the hope of a better world.
- The author of the letter to the Hebrews also begins chapter 12 with a reminder.
 - After presenting the gallery of heroes of faith (chapter 11), he invites us to follow the example of these witnesses, to forsake sin, to persevere, and to keep our eyes on Jesus.
- On this Remembrance service we live between memory and hope.
 - We are called to follow in the footsteps of those who came before us:

- both heroes of faith
- as much as the heroes of history,
- and continue the race they started.

1. FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

- We are surrounded by a large cloud of witnesses
 - These witnesses are not ethereal beings observing us, but real people who inspire us.
 - They bear witness with their own lives to what it means to trust in God and remain steadfast even when all seems lost.
- The gallery of faith is made up of ordinary people:
 - Joseph, who faced very serious family dramas;
 - Moses, who fought against injustice and led a difficult people;
 - David, who resisted the temptation of revenge.
 - Each one ran their own race, facing evil, fear, and discouragement.
 - They are like relay runners, passing the baton of faith from generation to generation.
 - Now it's our turn to run, knowing that others will reap the rewards of our faithfulness in the future.
- Those who fought in the wars believed in future peace and freedom; something that was beyond their own time.

- We also race for something that transcends our time: the celestial city where peace will be complete and eternal.
- About that,
 - We live with our feet on the ground and our eyes turned towards the sky.
 - sustained by the hope that God is restoring all things,
 - and fulfilling our calling, just like the heroes of faith.

2. LET US PUT ASIDE SIN AND EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS US.

- After reminding us who came before, the letter to the Hebrews gives us practical guidance:
 - "Let us put aside everything that hinders us and the sin that entangles us."
- The Christian life demands lightness.
- Calvin said that "the heaviest burden we carry is sin."
 - Sweet to the palate, but bitter in the stomach.
 - Sin is like a backpack full of stones: the more we carry it, the more tired we become.
- This "burden" is not always just moral;
 - sometimes it is made of
 - excessive worries,
 - excessive ambitions,
 - resentments,

- It may even be our effort to always be the "owners of the truth".
- Anything that robs us of our freedom to love and serve becomes a burden.
- These things have the power to possess us.
 - We are possessed by what we possess.
 - If what sustains us is status or power, we will be enslaved by it.
 - But if what we have is the peace of Christ, we will live surrounded by that peace.
- To forsake sin is, therefore, an act of freedom:
 - Choose to live lightly, with a heart open to love.
- In the context of Remembrance Day, this call resonates in a special way.
 - Many who went to war left behind their homes, families, and comforts so that others could live in freedom.
 - Similarly, Christian discipleship
 - It's an invitation to give up oneself for love.
 - and to exchange what is secondary for what is eternal.

3. LET US RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS.

- "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus."
- The word "race" comes from Greek. *agon*, which is the root for agony.
 - That says a lot: the race of faith is demanding.
 - It requires discipline, consistency, and courage.
- Each person has their own path, and it's not a sprint, but an endurance race.
 - God doesn't expect us to arrive quickly.
 - he hopes that we do not give up.
- History shows that peace and freedom need to be continually cultivated, as an endurance run.
 - After every war, new threats emerge.
 - Peace and faith are always one unfinished race
 - And that's why we need to persevere.
 - We need to be witnesses by persevering to continue what others before us have strived to achieve.
 - And it is through perseverance that we are transformed.
- The soldiers we remember today ran their race with courage, perhaps even without seeing the final result.
 - Likewise, we are called to stand firm - believing, loving, and serving, even when the world seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

- To persevere is to insist on goodness, justice, and hope when everything invites us to the opposite.
- And to persevere, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.
 - We look at Him in such a way that all distractions disappear.
 - Peter tried to walk on the water to find Jesus and sank when his eyes were distracted by the rough sea.
 - When we look to Jesus, we find direction and strength.

4. TO REMEMBER IS TO RESIST.

- Remembrance Day is not just a day for remembering, but for commitment.
 - Remembering is an act of resistance.
 - To remember is to say that peace has value.
 - It's about choosing not to repeat the mistakes of the past.
 - It is to affirm that hope lives on.
- When we partake in Communion, we repeat the words: "Do this in remembrance of me."
 - To participate in Communion is the same as saying:
 - We haven't forgotten;
 - We are persevering.;
 - We are witnesses.

- In the Christian faith, remembering is an active verb.
 - It is about living in a way that is consistent with what we remember.
 - These days the country bows before the monuments and names engraved in stone.
 - We also honor them and go a step further.
 - We bow before the cross, remembering that our redemption also cost blood.
- the blood of the Prince of Peace.
- Now we live committed to honor it.
 - To remember is to resist.
- We live in a world where there are those who love war.
- But Hebrews reminds us:
 - our hope is beyond this world.
 - We are journeying toward the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, where peace will be complete and lasting.
 - Meanwhile, we continue running, being instruments of future peace in the present time.

CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, it is important to remember those who believed that it was worthwhile to fight for peace.

- And we now are committed to work for the peace conquered, believing that it is worthwhile to live by faith.
- For at the end of the race there will be no more war, nor mourning, nor pain;
 - And every tear from our eyes will be wiped away.
- Until then,
 - Let us run with perseverance.
 - Remembering,
 - loving,
 - and hoping.
 - And as we look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, may we be renewed in our faith to finish the race.
 - So, let us be active witnesses of peace.
 - Let us be a cloud of witnesses for today and for the future.

Bibliography

Calvino, Hebreus, 337.

Hernandes Dias Lopes, Hebreus, 191-196.