The 15th Anniversary of 9-11 is upon us –

It is hard to believe that it has been fifteen years… it seems just like yesterday that I was sitting at my long conference table meeting with the FAA, the Orlando Executive Airport authority, and the City of Orlando, planning the next Navy Days celebration and airshow.

- Tell story of the events of that day -

Do you also remember the events of that day like it was yesterday? I am sure you do unless you were too young. That day has been engrained deep into our memories.

- 2,996 Died; 265 in the four airplanes, 2606 in WTC, 125 Pentagon
- Over 6000 estimated injured
- Thousands have subsequent health problems from exposure

That day truly changed the world in many ways; buildings were not just burned but the world was set afire.

- New Intelligence Measures
- Department of Homeland Security
- Harassment at airports by the TSA
- Military Campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq

At the end of 2014 it was reported that close to 4,500 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines, had died in Iraq. The same report stated the numbers in Afghanistan of war dead were over 2,300. Both conflicts have produced innumerable wounded and broken men and women.

Today Iraq seems to have been lost. It breaks my heart to see the pictures of Ramadi and Fallujah, destroyed by Isis. I remember well the fighting that was there when I first deployed. I also remember the children playing in the streets when I last left. Now the streets are filled with rubble and not play; the children are gone.

And the Afghan war seems to take the same path as the last four modern wars fought in that country. Since the 1830s there have been 3 failed wars by the United Kingdom and one that helped bring down the Soviet Union. And now Afghanistan crumbles under the weight of a fifteen-year war with no hope of peace in sight.

As we look back on the events of the past fifteen years it is very easy to get discouraged – to lose hope. Many have already lost hope in our nation.
We have trusted in so much to bring peace to our troubled world, and yet **we remain Fearful**. We claim that Al Qaeda has been defeated, but it appears however, that terrorism is on the rise. Like the Greek Myth of the Hydra, (the beast that if you cut off its head two larger ones would grow back), we now have a new and greater enemy in Isis. The world seems to be continually fractured in war and instability.

Looking back on the past fifteen years we cannot say we have been successful. And it would be easy to become discouraged as this struggle continues. However since the time of Christ, our world has been a turbulent place, and it will remain so until Christ’s return.

Our Gospel passage gives us a different view of our age. It says:

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.* *(Matthew 24:6-8)*

**Driving through Colorado illustration** – mountain ridges appear like they are stacked up one upon the other, but are over an hour apart!

The same way when we look at our scripture we have difficulty pairing apart the truths of Christ’s resurrection from his coming in Judgment at the end of the age. Between his first coming and his return.

**The Disciples too had difficulty, they asked: When will this happen?**

Wars, earthquakes, persecutions, and false prophets are all birth pains or signs of Jesus Coming. But that second coming is like a mountain range in the distance that seems such a long way off. These birth pains are signs of his coming in judgment and not of **when** he is coming. As Christ says, such things must happen, but the end is still to come. These signs characterize the whole time between Jesus’ resurrection and his coming in Judgment. The disciples asked for a time **when** all this would come to pass, but the only **when** they got from Christ was a task, a charge for them to get the Gospel out to the nations.

**But he who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.** *(Matthew 24:13-14)*
Wars and rumor of wars, all the pains of this age are something that has come upon us since the time of Christ. They will be with us until Christ returns. They will be with us until our mission to get the Gospel out to all the world is complete. We may look up at that mountain off in the distance and feel discouraged at the long road we have to travel. But it is our call in Christ to persevere.

It is not a matter of success or failure in war but rather an element of the struggle that characterizes this time between Christ’s first coming and his return. As we have struggled with tyranny in the past, as we defeated the Nazi’s in WWII, a struggle that grew out of the problems that precipitated WWI, and as we defeated communism in the Cold War, 1947-1991, about forty-four years, and Piracy in North Africa and the Caribbean lasted over 150 years!

We too will be victorious with God’s help in our conflict with terrorism; even if it is protracted for another thirty-five years. The truth is this conflict has had different names, it has different players, but it has been going on since the fall of man, and it will continue until Christ’s return, when he comes in Judgment. The task for us today is to remain faithful within the time that God has placed us, and to look to him for our ultimate victory.

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My favorite quote from the *Fellowship of the Ring*.

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*)

- Endure to the End
- Keep the faith
- Pray for the lost

Pray for those who have lost their loved ones on that fateful day fifteen years ago, and since then, that they would be comforted by the hope of eternal life guaranteed to us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, *and then the end will come.*