

“Desires, Hopes, Dreams”

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Gaylord, Michigan

November 28, 2021

Texts: Isaiah 40: 9-11; Luke 1: 67-~~68~~ 79

Just who are the prophets and what is their role in our faith story? Are they predictors of the future? Is their only function to tell us Jesus is coming? Are they just popular preachers? How did their work get into the Bible, anyway? These, and other questions are common when it comes to the prophets. Most people think them prognosticators, whose only role was to tell us the Messiah, whom we say is Jesus, was coming as appointed by God. Now that is not entirely wrong, as clearly there are many scriptures, particularly from the prophet Isaiah that seem to speak of his coming. The most prominent one, Isaiah 9: 2-7, we will hear next Sunday. But is that their only role?

I would argue that in fact this was a secondary role, only known in hindsight. Their primary role was centered in their present circumstances. Hear again the scripture from the book of Isaiah this morning:

Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,

popular preachers of their day, and often even when consulted by kings, they

for their words. Haunted and hunted by the powers that be. They were not

the Kingdom of Heaven that the prophets proclaim. And often they paid dearly

seem to proclaim Jesus is because Jesus embodies the very values and mores of

place where those who are outcast belong. One of the reasons the prophets

poor, the widowed, the orphaned, the hopeless and the distraught. God wills a

And those rules benefit the last, the lost, the hungry, the hurting, the ill, the

the world.

The prophets proclaim a world where the rules of God's kingdom are the ways of

mistreats the foreigner (for example) or the widowed, and especially the poor.

systems and structures of oppression, and the pain caused by society as it

people, not individuals (other than the king, perhaps) are the problem. It is the

instead, the people have not been faithful. That is another key point here. The

world in which people do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God.

where justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream, a

The prophets dream of a world in which there is a lion lying with the lamb,

cases.

of their contemporaries. My friends, what they say is not comforting in most

Brian McLaren does an excellent job of talking to us about what it means to have desires, hopes and dreams versus wishing. We all wish we'd have the world God intends. And yet, McLaren tells us that, "Desires, hopes, and dreams inspire action, that's what makes them so different from a wish. Wishing is a substitute

people God calls for us to be.

desperately needs people of wisdom, but also courage, to help us become the community. It's not that what he said was easy, but that it was wise. Our world spoke, he spoke wisdom. He was often challenging for me and for the

that community so much, God rest his soul. And yet, I came to learn that when he served solo that often had few words to say. Lloyd cared about that church and famous, more likely they are not. We had a guy way back in the first church I

you can think of some people who are like that whom you know. Maybe they are are and genuinely want the best for the people to whom they prophesy. Maybe dreams, and barriers that we have. They are people who see things for what they

Prophets are ordinary people much of the time, with the same fears, hopes, who claim to be prophets simply don't fit the bill.

places. We have many examples in our recent history, but I'm afraid that many tend to have short life spans and they tend to not have a lot of friends in high

to step into the arena of public discourse. People in far "lesser" kingdom roles get

their lives threatened every day.

I don't know who the next prophets will be, but I do know that a place for

all of us to start is with the question, "What would the prophets of yesterday, like

Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and others say to this nation, this

community, this church today?" Our answers to that question might lead us to

what is ours to do next. Complacent wishing won't make the world the kingdom

for which we pray every week.

Desires, hopes and dreams are good things. But all of them require action.

No matter what our desires, hopes, and dreams are, I hope that this desired

future will guide us in how to act now.

in the many blessed names of God. Amen.

Dark mode: **Luke 1: 67-79****Zechariah's Prophecy**

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them,

He has raised up a mighty saviour for us

in the house of his servant David,

as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who

hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,

and has remembered his holy covenant,

the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,

might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness

before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

to give knowledge of salvation to his people

by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

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