

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

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Sunday Scriptures: 31st January 2021

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 *Moses proclaims God's promise of His prophets among the people.*

¹⁵The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' ¹⁷Then the Lord replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put My words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in My name, I Myself will hold accountable. ²⁰But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in My name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak – that prophet shall die." ²¹You may say to yourself, 'How can we recognise a word that the Lord has not spoken?' ²²If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove True, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it.

Reflection:

Anyone contemplating a prophetic calling, on reading this passage, would run away as far and as fast as their little legs could carry them! Prophets bear the heavy responsibility to speak the Word of God in Truth and obedience. This calling is accountable directly to God and carries the death penalty for disobedience. The lives and trials of many prophets are recorded in Scripture: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos to name but a few. However, do not think that prophets and prophecy are limited to people of the past. In **ACTS 2:17-18** both are foretold as being raised up among us in every time and place: ¹⁷'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out My Spirit; and they shall prophesy. Scripture spells out that since the time of Christ we have been living in "the last days", therefore, prophets and prophecy are among us today according to God's promise. An obvious historical example would be Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailing his 95 theses of reform to the door of the church. Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968) campaigning for civil rights, particularly his 'I have a dream' speech might be the most well-known example.

What or who is a prophet? Put simply, prophets are people who tell it like it is! Prophets might experience visions and dreams as stated in Acts. They may be gifted with spiritual and moral insight more sensitive than the norm and utter divinely inspired revelations such as words of wisdom or knowledge. But the essential ingredient is a deeply personal relationship with God. Perhaps I should also clarify that prophets are not sooth-sayers or fortune-tellers with crystal balls. On the contrary, prophets are people of prayer who speak only what God gives them to say and know only what God reveals, nothing more and nothing less. Those called by God in this way are raised up by Him to speak His Word in Truth and love without fear or favour. God's prophets do not necessarily hold office or operate a prophetic ministry forever. God can and does speak through anyone living in a right relationship with Him. Such was Jahaziel, a faithful believer in the middle of the crowd

with no particular distinction (2 chronicles 20:14-17). Jahaziel spoke the Word of God only once, but bravely and publicly before the king and a nation was saved. How brave are we to speak the Word of God to those in authority from the midst of a public assembly? Yet this is what God requires of us and what Jesus commanded us to do in order to deliver and build the Kingdom of God.

How do we recognise God's prophets among us today? Jesus told us that a prophet will most likely be rejected! *Why might that be?* Human nature seeks control of their environment for self-preservation, which includes elimination of perceived threat either by denial or confrontation. God's prophets are truth-tellers, the Lord's whistle-blowers following God's heart for a situation, circumstance or person. Such people are not remote but living and working among us within our community dedicated to delivering God's Word, will and purpose. As prophets are often called to challenge corruption, particularly in leadership, they will inevitably do so to the detriment of their own wellbeing. The devil is only interested in those following the example of Jesus and working for the Kingdom of God. Therefore, those following the world's example and working for their own kingdom will reject the Truth of a prophet and become the devil's advocate in seeking to remove them. I was once told by a wise spiritual director that if controversy surrounds you, you're in company with Jesus and must be getting something right! Like Jesus before us, a prophet is likely to say things that challenge our ways of thinking and behaving. A prophet will not always be popular for speaking truth but following Jesus is not about winning a popularity contest, "but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). *Are we watchful for those demonstrating prophetic characteristics?*

Our challenge is to pay attention to God's command to heed what God says through His prophets in our time and place. We may not like the message but if it comes from God we dare not shoot the messenger! Our warning is to note that God will hold accountable anyone that does not pay attention to those He sends to prophesy His Word over His people. Christians are only human and liable to make mistakes, hold wrong attitudes and be tempted into wrong ways just the same as any other human being. It is not a sin to get angry or upset neither is it a sin to challenge what we believe to be contrary to God's Word. Sin is enacted when we ignore the challenge to address wrongdoing either in others or ourselves. Throughout the relationship of God with His people, there has always been a necessity to remind us of God's rule of life when we go astray. This is why God has always sent His prophets and will continue to raise them up among us to remind us of how to live in Truth, justice and righteousness. *Is God calling you to be one of His prophets among us?* Do not be deceived, this path is often a lonely one which will inevitably put you at odds with others from time to time. However, the rewards of God's pleasure in your obedience are great and the consequences of righteousness restored will be received with joy by all His people, on earth and in heaven. **Amen!**

Hymn/Song: CD: The Word: Track 1: The Prophet *by* Michael Card

can be found on YouTube

Reluctant ride in the middle of the belly of a whale [Jonah 1:2](#)

A wheel on fire in the middle of the sky [Ezekiel 1:15](#)

Abandoned baby kicking on the side of the road [Ezekiel 16:6](#)

And a wife has died but you're denied the right to cry [Ezekiel 24:18](#)

Three men walk out protected from a furnace of flame [Daniel 3:19](#)

One man cries out from a miry well [Jeremiah 36:6](#)
See a man in the myrtles [Zechariah 1:10](#)
And women with the wind in their wings [Zechariah 5:9](#)
Understand what these seared lips can tell

Chorus:...

*I am the prophet and I smoulder and burn
I scream and cry and wonder why you never seem to learn
To hear with your own ears with your own eyes to see
I am the prophet, won't you listen to me?
I am the prophet, won't you listen to me?*

I hold out hope to everyone who hears and understands
The Word of God can echo in the voice of a man
He's the shadow of a great rock in a dry and weary land [Isaiah 32:2](#)
With the names of the ones He loved carved into His hands [Isaiah 49:16](#)

Chorus:...

The sorrow in His anger, my eyes weep His tears
His life alight in me
I am the sword that cuts His people apart [Hosea 6:5](#)
I speak the Word that comforts their faithless hearts [Isaiah 40:1](#)

Chorus:...

Poem: GOD's PROPHETIC WORD ©Janice Morgan-2015-July

The Word of God is prophetic in nature
It tells the story of human adventure
The journey of life with God at the helm
Leads to a place in the heavenly realm
Where secrets are kept by the Spirit of God
Awaiting the time when a spiritual prod
Is needed to show the next step on the road
Or give wisdom to shake off the hurt of the goad
The strength to hold on when the way becomes rough
Is found in the Word of the Lord; that's enough
To recognise signs and predictions of wonders
And keep all God's children from making great blunders
God's way to our future is now plain to see
Believe in God's Word; what He says it will be

Prayer: Father God, You are ever mindful of our ways; through trials and triumphs; joys and sorrows; abundance and need. Lord Jesus Christ, You have shown us the way to live in a right relationship with God and each other. Holy Spirit, we ask for Your help to discern those among us called to speak the Word of God and grace to receive the message they bring. **Amen!**
