

# What Is a Prophetic Community?

Sermon Notes for Jan 21, 2018 at Brentwood

Psalm 139:1-6 (566) & I Samuel 3:-120 (278)



**Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. (I Samuel 3:1)**

## Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

There is a whole school of how to preach that suggests that you should craft your sermons like a detective novel – keep people in suspense until the very end about the point you are trying to make – this isn't one of those sermons - here's the answer to this morning's question = **a community that hears and heeds God's desire for justice, kindness, and humility** – such a vision of being human, in our increasingly secular society, with its focus on individualism, selective hearing, and arrogant assertion, is rare – but it is needed – desperately needed if we churches are to be more flourishing outposts of the Commonwealth of God as spaces of hospitality and healing – three things arise for consideration from this suggestion about how we are with God, with each other, and with ourselves in ways that are authentic to God's desire – because that's what prophesy is about = hearing and heeding God's desire – it's the clear and compelling whisper of a lover in your ear about how to be together better – we'll look at the literary/rhetorical form prophetic oracles took throughout the Hebrew scriptures – then talk about the communities that preserved and passed on the messages – then look very briefly at what God is calling us to do in response to this vision

- Pat Dutcher-Walls course in Amos – complex, multi-layered, carefully constructed, poetry through which God calls for a hearing and lays out the consequences of not heeding - often in the literary form of an oracle – very familiar to the people Amos was addressing – 4 common characteristics of this form of communication = 1) call to an audience - 2) accusation or indictment of crimes that are being done all the time – 3) clarity about who the message is from – “Thus says the Lord. ...” – 4) punishment that fits the crime – done with finely-crafted forms of persuasive communication – God and the prophetic community wants this message heard and heeded
- It's a community that carries the message – we wouldn't have these texts if there was no community to preserve and pass them down from generation to generation, saying to any who the Spirit enables to listen that your attitudes and behaviours are having grave consequences that displease God – there is a

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cartoon that I thought of using this morning, with Jesus shouting down from the clouds, “Stop doing that!”

- I chose this image instead – another one of those that has no reference to artist – but I thought it captured the dynamics of prophecy as we have been exploring it – the energy that comes with this movement of God’s Spirit – at times confusing, at times comforting, and always challenging – “Change the ways you see things and do things in my world. You’re ignoring what I put you there to do. If you keep denying me and destroying my creation, you will generate dire consequences.” – and I’m going to help you make those changes, now that I have your attention
- So, prophetic communities, like Brentwood and every other church that gathers in God’s creation, are, and can be even better, places where that help is available – where we work with God to enable people to hear and heed God’s vision for the flourishing of the creation – where we, and these words are hopefully familiar to you, nourish souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ

### **So, what are we going to do with this ...**

I don’t remember having used the phrase ‘hearing and heeding’ with such intensity and intent in my preaching before, but when the Spirit drew it to my attention this week, it stuck, as you can hear – I hope, with me, that you will pay more attention after the reflections that our prophetic community has engaged in together this morning, to the vision that God has for his world – it may be rare in the culture around us, but let’s make it common place as we welcome everyone into this space of grace where God is continuing, week by week, to correct the rebellious ways of human beings in order to heal their hurts and nurture their wholeness

### **Your Notes ...**

### **Today’s Framework for our Prayers**

**Thanks** – for all of the ways you invite us to hear and heed your vision ... [a time of silent prayer]

**Help** – in finding in our relationship with you, the most intimate relationship in our lives, the wisdom and resilience to practice justice, kindness, and mercy in all our circles of influence ... [a time of silent prayer]

**Awe** – at the surprisingly simply ways you surprise us with the transforming grace of your vision for your creation ... [a time of silent prayer]