

#20 “The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?”

We come to the end. This is the end of this series of teachings. It is an arbitrary end. We are far from exhausting the subject of prophetic ministry in the Church. Numerous books, thousands of pages have been written on the topic, and if any of you want recommendations for further study I will provide those. What I have tried to accomplish in these teachings is to write a short weekly teaching about the ministry of the prophetic, relating some of what we learned at the school of prophecy in Selma. It was my hope that through these teachings I might be able to inspire many of you to embrace and utilize this gift of the Holy Spirit in your ministry within our parish.

I would like to end where we began--to bring these teachings full circle. In the initial teaching I stated that all prophecy starts with God. Prophecy reveals God's love. Prophecy builds up the Body, it strengthens the Church. That is the most important teaching about this or any gift of the Holy Spirit. The exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is not about us. The gifts are not “our gifts”, and we do not use them for our aggrandizement. It's not about you--it's about the Kingdom. All prophecy starts with God and it ends with God. Prophecy is a gift that God uses to reveal His love for His people and to build up His Kingdom.

Some of the questions that I did not attempt to address in the preceding teachings had to do with motives of the prophetic minister, and the use of the gift to build up the one prophesying versus building up the Body. Again, it is important to remember that all prophecy starts with God. It is easy for us to dismiss a prophecy when we stand in judgment over the one prophesying, questioning their motive and doubting their gift. If we trust God we need not concern ourselves with man's motive or any one person's gifting. This is God's Church and the Holy Spirit's gifts. We cannot answer every question regarding the ministry of the prophetic. We are finite creatures. We do not have the big picture. God is in control.

We may never completely understand the use of the gift of prophecy for ourselves or for the Church as a whole. But it is not important for us to understand the gift to be able to utilize it. What we need is the faith to be able to believe that God can use fallible, fallen sinners like us to build up the Body and to encourage the believers in His Church. We know and believe that words of prophecy are given to God's people “for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.” (1 Cor. 14:3) That should be reason enough to pursue this gift and exercise it in our parish ministry.

Again, I return to the initial teaching in this series. I asked, “So, what do we do with this truth?” We begin with the basics. This parish and the whole of the Charismatic Episcopal Church was birthed in prophecy. Our bishops move in the prophetic. We are a prophetic church. It is important for us to embrace this ministry of God in order to fulfill the calling that God has placed on our parish to bring the testimony of Jesus to this city. The prophet Amos said, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:7-8) And King Jehoshaphat exhorted the people of Israel with these words: “Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets and you will succeed.” (2 Chron. 20:20)

All prophecy starts with God, so we must begin with the revelation God has given us in His Holy Word. God loves us and continues to speak to His Church today. He has tremendous plans for this parish. “The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?”