

#3 What Does Prophetic Ministry Look Like?

Prophetic ministry looks like the ministry of the Church -- the healthy Church. How do we minister to one another? How do we bring the testimony of the Gospel to the unsaved? How do we “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ”? (Baptismal Vow, BCP p. 305) Through the prophetic ministry of the Church. If, as the Book of the Revelation declares, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” (19:10) then any effort by the Body of Christ to declare the truth of the Gospel is the spirit of prophetic ministry.

Many years ago, Bishop Jones prophesied over this parish that our ministry would be one of “enacted prophecy.” He indicated that we would prophesy to the city through signs, symbols, the arts, and worship. We have seen that word fulfilled in the various outreaches we have done, particularly downtown. We reached out to the homeless on Christmas Eve in 2005 by enacting the Nativity in drama and dance, and offered blankets, hot chocolate, and Holy Eucharist. One Good Friday we did a living Stations of the Cross. This past October the young people of the parish gave testimony of Jesus in drama, visual arts, music, and dance. There was the Rock Mass, and Lenten worship in Pritchard Park, etc. That is what prophetic ministry looks like.

Prophetic ministry is grounded in the written Word of God, but it is exhibited in a variety of ways. Personal prophecy (a prophetic word given by one person to another) is most often spoken. As was pointed out in last week’s teaching, it is usually an illumination of a Gospel truth that the recipient needs to hear for encouragement, exhortation, or comfort. And more often than not a prophetic word given in the context of a worship service will be spoken. But this is not to discount the possibility that the prophetic word may be given in tongues, song, drama, dance, or visual art. When St. Paul was headed toward Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 21, the prophet Agabus “took Paul’s girdle and bound his own feet and hands, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle...”’” (vs. 11) That is an enacted prophecy.

As I said above, prophetic ministry looks like the ministry of the Church -- the healthy Church. When a parish church is healthy, it will move in the prophetic as it makes testimony of Jesus. Many churches would not use that terminology, but that is what they are doing. An unhealthy parish, one that is inwardly oriented, or where the membership is divided and broken, or has become worldly, will not be ministering the love of Christ because they are not grounded in and living out the Gospel. Prophetic ministry will reflect the health of the congregation. And it will reflect the diversity of the membership.

You may be gifted in music, or dance, or drama, or literature, or visual arts, or sewing, or singing, or whatever gift God has bestowed on you. Your prophetic ministry will reflect that gifting. A wordsmith will write, a dancer will dance, a musician will make music, etc. And when we yield our gifts to the Holy Spirit, He will give testimony to the Son by means of our gifting. As we look at the various lists of charismatic gifts in the New Testament (e.g. 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4; etc.) they are wide and varied, and not exhaustive. God’s gifts are as many and varied as the people to whom He has given them.

So, what does prophetic ministry look like? It looks like the ministry to which God has called you in the Church.