



Come and Be Healed

Mark 1:29–39 NIV

*“Let us go to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also.
That is why I have come.”*

February 8, 2015

Thought For The Week

Scriptures” Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 • 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35 • Mark 1: 21-28

Years ago in 1963, when I first worked in downtown Detroit, I lived in the little township of Redford. Every morning I would drive to work, usually varying my route based on anticipated traffic problems. I would always park in an area that had a reputation for being a “hippie” community. It was simply known as “Plum Street”. There were no parking restrictive signs around there and I was young and very active, so I parked for free and ran the four or five blocks into the Michigan Bell “Main” Telephone Building at 1365 Cass. And on my way, every morning, there on the corner of Bagley & Second Street stood a tall, young man, long black hair, black beard and wearing a sandwich board on which was printed: “Beware! The end is near.” As people walked by, he would yell, “Hey, you know the end is near.” People would smile and walk on. I don’t think anyone believed that prediction, I didn’t. But there he stood that entire summer and fall, wearing that board. Then one day in the middle of December he just disappeared and I never saw him again. Some people used to say: “He thinks he’s a prophet or something.” I personally didn’t think he had a mental problem; he was just convinced that the end was near and he wanted to make sure everyone was aware of that

I guess it must take a lot of courage to stand on the street like that and warn people about the disasters of the future, but that’s what prophets do. Prophets have been doing that, at least in the Jewish-Christian tradition since Moses and Jesus. Nonetheless, prophets are usually unappreciated because they need to say hard, but honest things. If you advertised in the paper or on television for a prophet, you would get very few people who would apply.

But Israel needed prophets; we need prophets because prophets have that astute skill of noticing when life is out of kilter in the secular world. Then, of course, being overwhelmed by God’s message, they are under pressure to let us know what we can do about worldly conditions. In other words, prophets, by their insights, bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular. They tell us where life in the world has gone awry and what we can do about it. But whether people of any age have listened is another question.

That is why I never get tired of reading Isaiah the prophet, for instance, or Jeremiah or Amos or Micah or Paul or above all, Jesus of Nazareth. They were often not well-liked because they insisted on proclaiming the truth to deaf ears, to people who imagined that all was well in the world and all was not well.

Interestingly, the scriptures speak a lot about prophets and prophecy. In the book of Deuteronomy the Israelite people are deathly afraid that God Himself may speak to them about their transgressions. Moses assures them that they will always have prophets to speak for God and then the criticism will not be so bad.

In the Gospel, the people listening to Jesus are astonished because “He speaks his mind, as one having authority and originality and not as the scribes who simply fall back on tradition and have nothing original to say.”

The interesting question to ask then is this: Who are the prophets of our age. Who speaks truth to power today, who speaks words that shame us or make us say, wow, are times really that bad? Well there are some folks who have done that and are doing so today. Here are the people on my list I would consider prophetic types? In addition to the biblical prophets, I would add the following:

Joshua Abraham Heschel, Jewish Rabbi and master teacher, who once said: “Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.”

Albert Camus, the French Novelist, said that the task of the Christian in the modern world is simply to be Christian. That will cause one to listen!

Dorothy Day, most of her life, took care of the poor by founding Houses of Hospitality around the country. She was thrown in prison several times for demanding rights for women. When someone told her that they thought she was a saint she said: “Don’t call me a saint, I wouldn’t want to be dismissed that easily.”

Henry David Thoreau, before “being green” was the in thing wrote: “In wildness is the preservation of the world.” You can’t say it any better than that.

Daniel Berrigan, the Jesuit, jailed a number of times for his peaceful protests. His favorite saying is: “In war, everybody loses and nobody wins.”

Deitrich Bonhoeffer, German Lutheran Pastor, wrote some beautiful books on peace, all of which brought him to Flossenburg prison and hanging by Hitler’s SS.

George Carlin the poet and humorist, his language did not always make him many friends, also managed to say some things that could make you hesitate for a moment: “Life is not measured by the number of breaths you take but rather by the moments that take your breath away”, maybe pardon for his transgressions.

Israel A. Smith, son of Joseph Smith III, was the fourth prophet of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was “my” prophet during my entire childhood. Brother Israel, as he was affectionately called, was known as a kindly and spiritual man who guided the Church as its prophet-president from 1946 until 1958, when he was killed in an automobile accident. Taking the reins of the Church government at the age of seventy, he made an effort to maintain unity at a time when the fundamental-liberal rift was fermenting. He was a true Restorationist himself, and strongly defended the Book of Mormon and the RLDS distinctives. He staunchly defended Joseph Smith’s innocence in regard to polygamy, and opposed the stance of the Utah Church.

The point is, the world has always had its prophets and many have not been very well liked. Some got thrown in to dry cisterns (Jeremiah) for their preaching, others got laughed out of town. But their common denominator was simply the fact that they were on fire to make this world a better place & were willing to die for it.

So, perhaps that is the reason why we can all be prophets if we want to, not because we like to get under the skin of other people, but rather because it is our common duty to speak truth to power. It’s just a matter of looking life in the face and asking, “Is there something wrong going on here, and what can I do to change it for the better?” That’s the question that should bother us.

Prayer Thought for the Week

Great God, Creator of all that is or has ever been, we praise you for knowing each of us, small parts of your creation. We thank you for the blessings in life: for family, friends, and those who give particular meaning to our lives.

We confess our shortcomings—those thoughts and acts that prevent us from being the people you created us to be. Forgive us, we humbly pray, and guide us into paths of true service. Help us be the peacemakers we yearn to be.

We lift the country of Sweden in our prayers. May its citizens know peace among themselves and with others.

May our desires be a reflection of your vision for all creation as we ask your blessing for our needs and concerns this day.

Hear our prayer, O God, as we offer ourselves to be instruments of your peace. Amen.

Stewardship Thought for the Week

I once saw a Stewardship Card while visiting a Methodist church. It mentioned John Wesley's sermon on "The Use of Money." I decided to check it out. I started by scanning it. It is long, 10 pages. Never once did it mention mortgage, car insurance, braces. It doesn't talk about gas prices, traffic jams, baseball or yard work. Clearly, an outdated piece and not relevant to my life.

Maybe not though. Looking at it more closely, I found it really very comforting to read.

- 3 pages devoted to gaining all you can. Doing it in a balanced and sustainable way that doesn't hurt others or yourself.
- 2 pages devoted to saving all you can. Not wasting money on gratifying pride.
- And 2 pages on giving all you can. And discerning where to give.

So I would just say that Wesley's sermon comes with my recommendation. Check it out on your choice of iPad, Android, or Blackberry device. I think that you might find it instructive.