

## What does it mean to be a prophet

c-c-4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of OT

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born I consecrated you.

Very strong comments on the sacredness of life.

Everyone who works to procure an abortion should consider these lines from Jeremiah.

To be formed and consecrated by God, and then destroyed by humanity is wrong.

When Jeremiah notes that we have been consecrated from the very beginning,

what he is really saying is that from the very moment God created us,  
he called us to a specific vocation.

When we are baptized, our calling became formal.

Now it is important to remember that when we were baptized  
we were baptized as Priest, Prophet, King.

Meaning all of us have been called to be prophets.

I must add that everyone has been called to be a prophet,  
which is different than being called to be a martyr.

So if we have been called by God, we had better get ready for our calling.

Jeremiah says, "Gird up your loins."

Today we might be more inclined to say, "Start rolling up your selves,"  
get ready because there is work to do."

And we can never forget that if we do our part, God has promised that he will do his part,  
he will make us into a fortified city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall—  
something that will resist anything that might oppose us.

This is the Good News... To know that God is with us.

But there is bad news and the bad news is that a prophet is not accepted in his own hometown.

I don't often disagree with scripture

but I have to say that I have never felt rejected in my hometown.

But the question I would have about Jesus' statement is this,

"We know that when Jesus got up to read, the people were not ready to accept him,  
but were the people ready to accept any prophet?

Or were they so caught up in their own world,  
that any outside influence was totally rejected.

The word prophet comes from two Greek words meaning "to speak for."

Prophets are not just about foretelling the future.

More importantly, prophets are about telling the truth about what is happening today;  
especially about what God is doing in our lives--today!

Prophets speak for God, or they apply God's word to an existing situation,  
or simply, they point out the truth, no matter how uncomfortable that truth may be.

And there-in lays the problem.

Many people are not ready to hear the truth.

And because we are not ready to hear the truth, the job of the prophet becomes doubly difficult.

Jeremiah had the difficult task of telling people the truth,

that if they didn't change their ways, their city was going to be destroyed.

Because he was saying these things he was: hounded, beaten, and called unpatriotic.

In the end he was not listened to,

and in the end his words proved to be true, the city was destroyed.

It was only after he was killed and the city was destroyed

that people recognized him as a prophet and started acknowledging him as a true prophet.

We know how easy it is to honor the prophets after they are dead.

When Martin Luther King was alive he was hounded by the FBI,  
condemned by many politicians,  
and finally shot to death by a man who did not want to hear his message.

History has shown over and over that society has treated prophets with contempt,  
and it was after their death that they are recognized as the great men and women they were.

It was no different with Jesus.

From the moment Jesus started preaching the Good News, he was treated in the same way.  
The people did not want to accept the possibility that the Good News was for all people,  
and not just for a select few.

For this message he was hounded, beaten and hung on a cross.

To those who work diligently to uphold the sacredness of life through the pro-life movement.

I say do not be discouraged at the set-backs that you might encounter.

You are prophets who are speaking to a world that does not want to listen.

I have no doubt that centuries from now you will be recognized for the prophets you are.

Whether it be Jeremiah, Martin Luther King, Jesus or any of the contemporary prophets.

They felt the overwhelming responsibility of their call, they were hounded from all sides,  
but they never stopped speaking the truth.

They learned the hard way the cost of being a prophet,  
but they also discovered through their trials and tribulations,  
what it means to be truly loved by our God.

This is what prophets have in spades, they feel the love of God,  
they know what it means to be to be protected by the mantle of Christ's peace,  
and they have no doubt in their mind that no matter what happens the love of God will prevail.

Which is where the second reading comes into play.

It is a reading that many of us have heard at a wedding.

It is easily applied to the love a bride and groom share.

But first and foremost this reading is in reference to the love God has for us  
and the love we ought to have for God.

Paul is very clear, without love, the love of God and the love of neighbour,  
all our actions become meaningless.

Jeremiah, or for that fact any one of the prophets, needed to have the love at the center of their being.

They understood that Love is patient, love is kind...

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.

Love is what gave Jesus the power to be victorious on the cross.

Love is what gave Jeremiah the strength to go against the grain.

Love is what fuels the pro-life movement.

Love provides the power and strength to endure suffering.

Without it, we are truly nothing.

And Paul's final words, "love does not come to an end," are so true,  
and nowhere are they more true than on the cross.

On the cross, when Jesus died, love did not come to an end.

The question that needs to be asked is this.

If we know that in the end God prevails.

If in the end we know that God's love trumpets over all opposition,  
why is it that no one wants to be a prophet?

There are three main reasons why we don't live up to our baptismal call to be a prophet.

The first, we place success ahead of being faithful.

Our desire to be successful, and I might add,

Our desire to be successful in the ways the world judges success,  
is such that we don't do anything that would jeopardize our jobs,  
our social position, or our chance of advancement.

We want to be loved and admired by everyone around us.

It is interesting, today's gospel scene takes place

right after Jesus has gone through the three temptations in the desert.

One of the temptations the devil put before him

was the power and glory of all the kingdoms on earth--to be a worldwide success,  
and Jesus rejected it.

Jesus was not preoccupied with being successful in the way the world views success,

but he was preoccupied with being successful in the ways that God viewed success.

His mission was to speak the truth and he spoke the truth, even when no one was willing to listen.

The second reason we don't want to be prophets is because of a false sense of charity.

We say we don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to hurt people.

We would rather say something that is more comforting, than risk offending someone.

But we must remember that God prefers the risk hurting someone with the truth,

than pacifying them with something that is less than the truth.

The third reason we don't want to be prophets is that we want to be popular.

All of us want to be liked, and so we avoid saying anything that would interfere with that.

It takes a great deal of personal courage to tell the truth, or do whatever God asks us to do.

But I want you to really think about this one;

if you look back on your lives, who are the people

who have been most influential in making you into the person you are today.

Are they the ones who told you what you wanted to hear,

or are they the ones who told you the truth?

Because when we hear the truth, it will strike us to the core of our being

and we will reform our lives.

If we merely hear something that makes us feel good, then there will be no change.

The people who have helped us the most, are the people who told us the truth,

no matter how much we did not want to listen to them.

When it comes to prophets and prophecy we often shoot the messenger.

It is easier to blame the church or the priest, than confront our own attitudes.

We cannot allow ourselves to fall into this temptation.

But it does make me wonder, how many prophets we have killed in our lifetime.

When it comes to prophets and prophecy

I love the words of the song that the youth sang at our last Face to Face—

Better one day in your home, than a 1000 elsewhere.

Better to live the truth, no matter the consequences, than to live a lie for the rest of eternity.

Fr. Jim Kaptein, Nipawin, Sask.