

Fren-06 Prêtre Etprophète (Priest and Prophet)

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon explores the essential dual role of the prophet in confronting falsehood and restoring God's kingdom through radical obedience and sacrifice.

Duration: 56:42

Scripture: Exodus 4:10-12, Deuteronomy 4:2, Isaiah 6:6-7, Jeremiah 1:7-10, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Priest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of destruction and restoration in the kingdom of heaven. He refers to Acts 3:21, which speaks of the period of restoration of all things. The speaker calls for men who are dedicated to the glory of God and will not compromise with false ecumenism. He highlights the commission given to prophets, which is to pluck up, break down, destroy, and overthrow before building and planting. The speaker warns against losing the sharp edge of God's love and emphasizes the need for divine severity and judgment alongside mercy.

Transcript

... slight hemorrhaging that continues still. The Lord is ready to continue to draw more blood. So I just want to warn you and prepare you.

It's my continuing subject this morning, and evidently necessary in the Lord's sight. So I want to pray again for the Word, that it comes to us not only as instruction but as event, and that we will be changed by it. And for that, who is sufficient? If Paul had to say who is sufficient for these things, what shall we say? So we just thank you, precious God, for the glory of your Spirit and your Word, the Word which is sent, not the Word which is contrived, the Word which does not seek to please men, but to please God.

Lord, please this morning, and let your Spirit honor your Word, to penetrate our deepest heart, to give us a divine understanding, and to change us, and we'll thank you and praise you for our unspeakable privilege in Christ. In his holy name we pray. Amen.

I'd like to introduce my interpreter this morning, Andrew Wiles. We picked him up someplace along the way. It was one of those divine accidents, and the Lord has birthed a relationship that he knows me so well that even if I forget myself, he can continue on.

I want to begin this morning in the Prophet Jeremiah, the first chapter. God's call to him, where he says, I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations, which indeed is our prophetic task also as the Church, and like us, he too was reluctant for such a call. Behold, I do not know how to speak.

I'm a child. Isn't that what we say? And indeed it's true. And the day that we don't say it and don't feel it, we come to some kind of religious confidence in ourselves.

We are disqualified from being a mouth for his speaking. We always need to come in trembling and recognize that we don't know how to speak. But he says that you shall speak all that I shall command you.

Do not be afraid of them, not so much the world as the believers. We're more easily intimidated by the Church than we are by the world. How will they receive us? Will they applaud our ministry? Will we find acceptance in their sight? Don't look at their faces.

And the Lord stretched out his hand in the ninth verse and touched his mouth. Just as he touched Isaiah's, and I have put my words in your mouth. The prophet's words are never his own.

See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms. Not just the political and the secular kingdoms, but the religious kingdoms as well. And indeed it's the most difficult kingdom of all to bring down.

But down it must come if the kingdom of heaven is to be established in the earth. So what is your commission? To pluck up and to break down. To destroy and to overthrow before you build and plant.

Notice the ratio. Two to one. The destruction, the requirement for destruction is twice as great as the requirement to build and to plant.

And if you have no stomach or inclination for that, you're disqualified for the other. Do you like to destroy? It's painful and bloody. And it's an anguish.

But it's a necessity. Because this is an hour of restoration in the purposes of God. You say, what do you mean by that, brother? And I would direct you to Acts, the third chapter, the 21st verse.

About the sending of Jesus, whom the heavens must contain until the period of the restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times. If these are novel and new thoughts, I ask you to receive them by faith. If I could wring myself out or inoculate you with what's in my spirit, I would do it.

But take my word for it that this is an hour of restoration in God. That Jesus is pent up or contained in the heavens. He cannot be released for his return until the restoration of all things.

And I would direct you to Acts, the third chapter, the 21st verse. About the sending of Jesus, whom the heavens must contain until the period of the restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from the earliest times. This is a painful task.

Because what has grown up in two thousand years is all kinds of human, institutional and traditional accretions. It's a collection of human institutions, of human concretions that have become so habituated to them we think them normal. Even sacrosanct and untouchable.

I don't want to name them, but I could make some suggestions. They are issues that have exercised the Church through the centuries and have become part of conventional religious practice. And yet in my conviction, they are holding back the return of the Lord.

There's a profound sense in which we need to understand that we can hasten the day of the Lord's coming. It is not a fixed chronological event that will happen irrespective of anything. No, it's waiting on something.

The restoration of all things as God originally gave them in the beginning before man came with his taint and his traditions and his distortions. And the first task of the prophet before he builds and he plants is to root up and to pluck out and to destroy. If you have no stomach for that, if you're too squeamish, if you want a ministry that's acceptable to men, where you'll not offend, forget that you have a prophetic calling.

This is the prophet's first task because this is the first task of the prophet. Samuel even showed it in the text that we saw yesterday. Do you remember that Saul wanted Samuel to still come and pray with him before God? He said, yes, I have sinned against the Lord.

But look, let's forget about that now. Come now and stand with me before the people. It was a cheap and shallow kind of forgiveness.

No real sense of contrition before God. It's just a kind of a polite use of the word forgive. Without a genuine and appropriate repentance.

And the prophet would not lend himself to that kind of religious business. And we should not lend ourselves either. Because if the church itself is not authentic, if it does not itself stand for the truth, if it compromises on the essential and profound things, what shall we hope for in the world? He turned away.

And the king grabbed his garment and it rent. And we spoke last night of how the prophet saw this as a symbolic statement from God. The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day.

And still he pleaded with him that he would come and stand before him with the people. And Samuel did so. And then we read in 1 Samuel 32.

Bring you hither to me, Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him delicately, it says in the King James Version. It says in a joyful mood.

No, that's wrong. I think even the interpreters cannot bring themselves to the totality of God's Word. One of my favorite texts is about the Ethiopian eunuch.

And I preached it once in Denmark without any effect at all. And I could not understand it. It's a powerful word.

Until I learned, someone told me that they do not use the word eunuch in Denmark. It's too disgusting. It's too suggestive.

So they use the word servant or something of that kind. And therefore they rob from God the power of his own word. They substitute politeness for truth.

And it may be the same point in the French edition. But I like the English word, he came delicately. And I picture him with mincing steps as walking on eggshells.

After all, he's the ancestral enemy of the Israel of God. The persecutor of the church throughout the ages. Fiercely opposed to all that is of the spirit.

The symbol of worldly eminence. Titles. Esteem.

Prestige. Wealth. Position.

Flattery. Honor. Standing before the prophet of God.

Who is the antithesis of all these things. And he said, surely the bitterness of death is past. Let bygones be bygones.

Forget that I have persecuted the church. And tied the Anabaptists back to back and tossed them into rivers to drown. And took the apostolic church in every generation and burned it at the stake.

And let its giants rot in prisons. Surely the bitterness of the past is past. Let's make up.

This is an ecumenical age. That's cheap ecumenism. And false.

And the prophet of God will not tolerate it. Samuel said, as thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

Lock up, root out, and destroy. It's a bloody business. It's an uncompromising severity.

It will not tolerate a lie. It is utterly destructive. And it's the first function of the prophet.

The ax must be laid to the root. There's something that's required from us. That is unsparing.

Spare not and utterly destroy. But Saul could not bring himself to slay Agag. Though he's the symbol of the ancestral enemy of Israel.

Maybe there's some kind of unspoken affinity between kings. Maybe there's some kind of deeper psychological thing than that. If I spare you now, perhaps the day will come when you'll spare me.

Because I too am a man of compromise. And I want to avoid also the extreme severity of God. So if I don't push you, don't you push me.

Can you sense how this kind of leaven is working in the church today? I remember the first time that God broke this upon my consciousness. I had one of my rare Sunday mornings off. And the Jewish brother said, come to my church, I want you to hear my pastor.

A spiritual man. I thought, wow, what a treat. To set at the feet of another.

To hear God's word. I could not have been more disappointed. I sat up there in the great balcony of the church.

And I listened to these words coming forth. And they were everyone correct. It was a message about the spirit of God.

And yet inside, every alarm in me was going off. My ears said that it's acceptable and correct. But my spirit was recoiling.

And then the Lord showed me the problem. The words were correct. But the spirit of the speaking was a lie.

The words were radical. But the spirit was saying, don't take me seriously. Now don't you out there become alarmed.

I'm not expecting you to do this. This is just a sermon, remember? It's my Sunday requirement. So just lean back.

Just enjoy it as a sermon. No one's requiring anything from you. You don't push me, I won't push you.

You see to my sustenance and my pasturage and home. The benefits that come to me is being your pastor. And I'll see that you'll have your nice Sunday services.

And you'll get a good biblical word every week. But don't you alarm. I'm not requiring anything.

Against that spirit God says, hew it to pieces. It cannot be spared. Utterly destroy and spare not.

And we're so hesitated. The prophet did not. And he says that he hewed him to pieces before God.

There are other episodes in scripture of that kind. And they almost invariably involve prophets. You remember Elijah and the false prophets of Baal? He said, bring them here to me.

And he hewed them to pieces by the river. 450 of them. It's an extraordinary physical feat.

For which the Lord gave him a special anointing. You say, brother, this offends my sense of God. God is a God of love.

He would never do these things. He would never require these things. God is kind.

Must I quote you Shakespeare? You know the great line in Hamlet? When Hamlet, the prince, dealt with his own mother? He came home from school to find that his father, who was a giant and a Hyperion and a saint, had been murdered by his uncle. And that his mother had married the lustful beast that had slain her husband. Shakespeare says through Hamlet's mouth that she was lying with him between incestuous sheets.

Where are the Shakespeare's of the body of Christ? Who can speak words like that? By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And in this great scene of confrontation. For confrontation there must be.

If there is to be truth. He takes his mother's locket and opens it and pushes it in her face. On one side was the husband who was.

A giant, a man of stature. And the other side, this lustful beast. She has now married.

And he pushes this in her face. And she cries out, Hamlet, no more, no more. And he says, one must be cruel in order to be kind.

Secular men can understand that. And we who are called to be the prophets of God cannot. Other than destroy and spare not.

And he gives them to pieces before the Lord, at Gilgal. Gilgal itself is a significant place. It's the place where Israel was circumcised when they entered into the promised land.

Because they had grown up in forty years in the wilderness. And unlike their fathers had never been submitted to the knife of cutting. And the first requirement of the army of God as it came into the land of promise.

Before any Jericho could be taken. Was make thyself sharp knives. And circumcise the children of Israel.

A second time. There's a cutting that's required. But we shrink from the blood.

We want a religion that comforts. We don't want that cuts. And the world dies.

And drowns in its own blood. Because there's not a church that can call it to righteousness. That can confront it with the issues of truth.

Because it has spared itself. Because it has entered into false relationships and ecumenism. Because it has no compelling voice and no authority.

Because it has not obeyed the Lord. In the totality and the severity which he requires. So I want you to look in the book of Exodus.

Another episode of cutting. In the thirty second chapter. Chapter thirty two.

That comes with the prophet Moses. Who came down from the mount with the tablets of the law. To find the people of God in their charismatic dance.

Around the golden cap of their own making. Eating, drinking and rising up to play. Because they were impatient.

And they could not wait for the authentic thing to come down from the mount given of God. And so he confronted them in his prophetic power. His authority.

And ground their cast to powder. And made them to drink of it. And no one said, by what authority do you do these things? Because this authority was evident.

It was the prophetic authority. Given to men who obey God in absoluteness. And will not retreat from his severity.

That even smashes the tablets of God at the foot of the mount. Then they should cast pearls before swine. It will not compromise.

It will not bargain and make arrangements. The holiness of God. The glory of God.

A single eyed determination and insistence. Is the heart of the prophetic nature. And in the 26th verse of this chapter we read Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.

How these prophets speak. Equating the Lord's side with themselves. Elijah was the same.

It shall not rain nor dew but according to my word. This is either colossal egotism Or these prophets have come to some transcendent place that we have not yet attained. By which you cannot tell where the prophet ends and where God begins.

For they are one. Who is on the Lord's side? Come stand by me. It shall not rain nor dew but according to my word.

Do you find this offensive? Do you think that it lacks in humility? Or are we victims of the world's definition of that word? And know not the humility and the meekness of God. For Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. And not one of these self-defacing, Oh me, please, I'm not accustomed to public speaking.

Don't call on me. Initiation? But in the moment that God requires. Now.

Thus sayeth the Lord God of Israel in verse 27, Put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate and slay every man his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. Not thus sayeth Moses. Thus sayeth the Lord God of Israel.

It's one thing to slay Amalekites. Camel, sheep, oxen and ass. But let every man slay his brother.

Every man his companion. Every man his neighbor. You know what I've done in my Bible? I've put the word man in a box.

It doesn't come in French. It comes in English. It says that every man slays his brother.

Every man slays his friend. Every man his parent. And I've put the word, I've framed it in my Bible.

Every man. Every man. Are you a man of God? It's more than the question of whether you wear pants.

The widow said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God. The Pharaoh said of Joseph, Can we find another like this? A man. In whom the Spirit of God is.

God is waiting on men. And I think the key to our being it. The key to our priestliness.

That must precede our prophetic calling. For Jesus was prophet, priest, and king. And between the authority of king and the calling of prophet stands the necessary priestliness.

Of men who are consecrated to God. Who have put the sword on their side. And have gone in and slain.

Every man his brother. His companion, his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses.

And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. Moses said, consecrate yourselves today to the Lord. That the Lord may bless you this day.

It's called consecration. It's not the kind that we ourselves would conduct. Our idea would be to call up a French caterer.

And bring out a seven or eight course meal. With an appropriate musical ensemble. And then we would have several religious dignitaries on the platform.

A little inflated and pompous. With their five benetapper keys on their chain across their vests. And then we would invite Dr. So and So and the other doctor who is the president of the Pentecostal movement to address us.

And then we would award the diplomas to the candidates, the students. And we would call that day consecration. God's way is otherwise.

Who is on the Lord's side? Put your sword on and slay. Every man his brother. His companion, his neighbor.

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses. Notice the conjunction.

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. And they did according to the word of Moses. How many of us would have been so instant in our obedience? When the issue of blood is required.

We would have questioned the authority of the man. We would have accused him of deception and heresy. We would have given voluminous scriptural arguments of why it is that God could never require this.

But they did according to the word of Moses. Which was also the word of the Lord. Children, is there something growing up in your heart? Even in our short time together.

Of the kind of foundation for which our church is wanting. An authority that is wanting. That must come through men who are not the presidents of congregations and movements with their doctorate degrees.

But are appointed and called of God. Whose mouths are touched of God. Whose words are given by God.

Who receive an authority from God. That the people might do according to the word of the Lord that comes to them through Moses. And until we shall come to that, there shall not be glory in the church.

There's a little marginal note about what the word consecration means in my Bible. Fill your hands with blood. Anything less than this is not the consecration of God.

Have you ever drawn blood in the Lord's service? Have you ever taken out a glittering sword? And swung it without mercy? In the severity of God. Not looking at their faces. Not listening to their cries and their moans.

Their sentimental pleas. The accusations of cruelty. And lovelessness.

Which I have heard countless times. Ascribed to me. You lack love, brother.

How could you do this? How could you say this? Where's your love? And many of us will shrivel at such accusations. Even less than that is sufficient for us to wither up. And to recoil and to withdraw.

Not so the prophet. There must be an unsparing obedience to God. If God calls us, if God called the sons of Levi to go in and slay their father, their brother, their companion, their neighbor.

How then shall we hesitate about the traditions of men? And the institutional practices that have grown up in our religious lives. Can we not be equally as ruthless with them? And until we will be. He's going to be contained in the heavens.

Waiting the restoration of all things. That was spoken by the holy prophets. Since the beginning.

There's a consecration that is waiting for us as the prophets of God. It's a priestliness that precedes our prophetic function. A total obedience to God before a consideration to men.

And if our hands have not been filled with that blood. We have been denied the blessing that came to them in that day. We will be deprived of the blessing that has been given to us.

And have no authority to bless others either. For the prerogative to bless men is exclusively a priestly prerogative. And it has declined along with everything else in our religious generation.

The meaning of faith. The meaning of truth. The sense of holiness.

The fear of God. All in a pitiful state of decline. Even while the false prophets are telling us that this is in our age of charismatic renewal.

Where is the fear of the Lord? In the most man-pleasing institution on the face of the earth. The most monotonous and the most predictable. If we're not sure what the world is going to do tomorrow.

We can certainly be assured what the church is going to do Sunday. Utterly predictable. Wanting in the creativity of God.

And the moving of God's spirit. That attends those who are obedient. To do the word of the Lord.

So I want you to turn to chapter 9 of Leviticus. Which is the first description of the ordination or the consecration of priests. It's a chapter full of blood.

It's painful even to read it. But by the time you come to its conclusion. You're wondering whether you're reading about priests.

Or you're reading about butchers. From fingertip to elbow they're steeped in blood and gaunt. It wrecks all of our fanciful and romantic notions of what priesthood is.

Indeed such notions need to be wrecked. Need to be destroyed. Because that's what has corrupted us.

The subtlety of a humanism. That has come even into the church. In which we project upon God our image.

And our definitions. It needs to be utterly destroyed and spared. What is performed in this chapter is given as commandment of the Lord through Moses.

Do you notice how frequent if not invariable it is that it's the prophetic voice that leads the church. I'm intrigued by a thesis that has recently come to my attention by a brother in America. He himself is a prophetic person.

And yet he's called the pastor of the church. And his thesis is that he is a prophetic person. And his thesis is this.

God gave to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. And the one who is given as pastor or overseer or shepherd. Is not himself a leader.

He has not this kind of single-eyed ruthless devotion to God. He can't draw blood. He always wants to make nice and comfort.

And counsel and confer and teach. Which is a valuable function. And indeed someone needs to come after the prophets.

To patch up and to heal God's people. But his thesis is that God did not call the pastor teacher to be the leader. But the shepherd and the overseer.

But that the real leadership of the church. Even in its individual congregations. Comes from its foundational men.

Its apostles and prophets. Who do not let themselves be disturbed. Who do not let themselves be deviated.

From their unique path. By softer considerations of comforting men. No wonder that our churches are predictable.

And monotonous. And everywhere the same. Having programs.

And missing the uniqueness of God's leading. Little wonder that some of you are hearing for the first time the very concept of restoration. You should have been teething on it from your earliest spiritual infancy.

But you had not prophets to proclaim it. To see it. And apostles to perform it.

Everything has been the pastor. So if you do not come out with anything else in these days but this. Pray for the restoration of all things.

And among the first of these. The restoration of prophets and apostles to the body of Christ. Men who are not time-servers or game-sayers.

Not religious politicians. And inflated statesmen with chains across their vests. Single-eyed fanatics.

Who insist on the glory of God. And will never lend themselves to compromise. Or false ecumenism.

That will swell the numbers of the church. And give an inflated appearance of things. Which are not true.

Men who will lead. That we might receive the word of the Lord again. As it comes to us through a Moses.

As it comes to us through a Moses. Through a Jeremiah. Or whomsoever.

This is the thing which the Lord commanded that you should do. And the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you. Moses said.

Moses said. This is the thing the Lord has commanded you. You would never have imagined it for yourself.

Not in a thousand thousand years. Because it is entirely offensive to your flesh. Which recoils at the sight of blood.

And you would have established something far more polite. Something far more religiously acceptable. But it would not have been my consecration.

Because if you are going to be a priest. A prophet. King.

And assert my authority in the earth. And be the bearers of my uncompromising word. You need to know that there is a cutting.

There is a bleeding. There is a death. But there is going to be a life.

This is at the foundation of the church. You need to be so steeped in it. It needs to get under your fingernails.

That you cannot forget it. And this is the key to glory. How mind-boggling this is.

If the glory of the Lord shall appear to you. This is the thing which the Lord commanded. What is the thing? And the eighth verse.

He slew the calf of the sin offering. And he dipped his finger in the blood. And he poured it out on the base of the altar.

Verse 12. He slew the burnt offering. And the sons presented unto him the blood.

Which he sprinkled round the altar. Verse 15. He took the people's offering, the goat.

And he slew it. It wasn't done for him. The priest himself must perform it.

He needs to have his face rubbed into the issue of death and life. It's something that is not performed for him, but by him. That's what Moses said.

Consecrate yourselves to the Lord. You do this. And if you are unwilling.

If this is too offensive. If it contradicts your sensibilities. You are disqualified.

This is the commandment of the Lord. And it's unavoidable. So he slew.

And he slew. And he slew. For my house shall be a house of sacrifice.

If it's to be a house of glory. Not a house of convenience. Or one hour, two hour Sunday services.

And a few francs in the collection plate. My house shall be a house of sacrifice. And if the priests don't know it.

And have not performed it. What shall we expect of the people? For as the priests. Tell the people.

The final humiliation is what is called the wave offering. The wave offering. In verse 21.

It's quite something else. Just a gesture. I want to assure you that these are not Jewish practices.

We Jews have no special affinity for blood. And indeed modern rabbis are embarrassed by these references. They dismiss this as primitive Judaism.

That has been replaced by higher forms. As Judaism has evolved. And we've come away from this barbarous practice of sacrifice.

Now we do good deeds. And we fast on the day of atonement. And our religion is much more refined.

And acceptable. And powerless. How many of our churches are synagogues? For exactly this reason.

We're unwilling to draw blood. We're unwilling to cut. Unwilling to sacrifice.

Unwilling to be confronted. Or to confront. We say we love the truth.

But we're not willing to suffer for it. Not willing to die for it. We're afraid of being offended.

Or becoming an offense. And our religion is powerless. And we have no prophetic voice for the nations.

I'm really amazed at the direction that God is taking. I assure you I did not plan it. I'm learning even as I speak.

And the Lord is driving something into my own heart and understanding. Something for which I need to be reminded myself after 18 years. For there's a dullness that has come to my own sword.

A subtlety of compromise in my own spirit. A man who was once fearless. And relentless for the truth.

But something happens. Over the course of time. It's inadvertent.

We breathe the world's air. And something comes into your spirit. To dull you.

And now I'm receiving new kind of compliments. You're much more gentle Art than you used to be. You're really more loving.

Kinder. And I'm worried. And I'm concerned.

I don't want to lose the sharp edge of God. Which I believe in my deepest heart. Is God's very love.

And if we are unwilling to be the instruments of His divine severity. Do you think that we shall be the instruments of His divine mercy? Because His mercy is unknown to us. And we're wallowing in a cheap grace.

Because we have been unwilling for His judgment. You cannot have the one without the other. No mercy without cutting.

God's divine severity is His love. God's divine severity is His love. And we have substituted a sentimental mish-mash.

To break a man. And we have no voice to the nation. Can you picture Aaron after he slew and he slew and he slew?

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