

K-446 Prophetic Communication

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon explores the critical role of prophetic communication in the church and the challenges of restoring its apostolic context amidst contemporary issues.

Duration: 21:13

Scripture: Hebrews 4:9

Topics: "Prophetic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of receiving the message of the mystery of God through a foundational servant sent from heaven. This message has the power to turn the world upside down and challenge the narrow perspectives of religious success. The speaker shares their personal experience of how the different aspects of faith came together in a new coherence when they received the word sent and given by God. They also highlight the significance of the vessel delivering the message, emphasizing the need for discipline, maturity, and submission to God and to men.

Transcript

God suffers a decline in the estimation of his own church if they don't behold his grandeur in this mystery. And what is the consequence of that, of God becoming minimized or, in the last analysis, trivialized? If you miss the grandeur of God in this remarkable mystery, O the depths of the riches, what kind of a God are you considering respecting, serving, worshipping? Everything will suffer decline in exact proportion as the estimation of God declines. That's fatal.

So this is not a little icing on the cake, this is the cake. And this result is visible for us who've had anything to do with the church, the contemporary church. We've seen exactly that once.

So the whole issue of Israel heightens and brings before the church the whole issue of fivefold ministry, and particularly apostolic and prophetic, the foundational ministries, which have either been ignored or not expected or many think already fulfilled. And this, that's the remarkable nature of this subject. There's no other subject given of God that brings every other aspect of the faith into the kind of focus, intense focus, that the subject of Israel does.

Because now, who are the prophets? We talked about this the other day. And if that function is not being served, how shall the vision be communicated? Then the issue comes, where do these prophets come from? And is the church providing an environment conducive for the bringing forth of those of that calling?

So it's like throwing a lock into a placid pool of water and the ripples go out right from shore to shore. Every other subject discovered.

That was my experience, that I had a lot of isolated choice things in my kit bag, the body of Christ, government of God, callings and so on. But when the Lord inserted this stone or this key in this lock, it was like click click click all the separate and isolated aspects of the faith came together in a new coherence that was overwhelming. So I trust that will be your experience as God's intention for the church's experience.

They'll have nothing but a collection of isolated truths, but it lacks the coherence that comes only when this significant key is inserted. That's where we have heresy is the exaggeration of one truth at the expense of others. And our condition is so lamentable that the church today cannot even distinguish between gift and office.

And there's a profound difference. So the gift of prophecy functions in another way, but it's not does not function to bring that groundbreaking penetration of the purposes of God that comes from the office, which is rare and needs to be recognized. That's why we're in danger if men aspire and take that title for themselves who are in fact not called and therefore unable to communicate that mystery.

Because the issue of Israel's restoration is death and resurrection. It's exactly that issue. But just to underline what you've raised this is the hour of restoration.

This is God's time to restore to the church, its apostolic and prophetic context. And it's no small task, maybe even more difficult than establishing those ministries at the inception of the church. Because now God has to work against a whole wealth of tradition, denominational denominations, the thinkings of men, ideologies, all of these things that contend against this revelation of these necessities.

So it's a remarkable and difficult period, but we need to understand the period we're in. This is a time of restoration, but it's not going to come one fell swoop as if a magical wand was passed over the church. It's going to come through confrontation, through issues, through dealings, through the circulation of these men, the church's opening, progressive welcoming of these men as they're loosed from their own fear, their insecurities.

One of the great issues today is the issue of pastoral ministry and prophetic calling. The pastor governs the church and not many welcome the prophetic men because they suspect upset that will inevitably come and they don't want that upset. They want the thing to continue in a way that assures their security, their place of esteem before the congregation.

So there's a real tension right within the structure of the church itself that needs to be recognized and prayed for. So to even come back again to the character of men, their insecurity can actually stop or obstruct such ministry coming to the church or when it does come, as I've had occasion painfully to experience over the years, what the pastor does after the prophetic word has come will either open the congregation to the recognition of the receiving of that word or shut it off. He can make nice, he can smooth it over, he can make it a non-event as I've heard some of the most eminent men do after a prophetic word whose names if I would name them would stun you because the tendency of the pastor is peace and comfort and not to aggravate or to provoke which is exactly the nature of the prophetic call.

So if they want to smooth over, they can undo, in fact the guy in Uganda said he's going to go back and undo all that that art cat said, but they can undo it right on the spot. The issue could be made or lost right on the spot, right after the speaking or even his presence if he's seated on the platform and the congregation can hear the speaker and look at the pastor and see his expression in his face and if he's in a resistant mode that already signals them. So these are remarkable dynamics in the church today that impede the thing most vitally necessary for the vital necessity of the church.

The pastor more than he knows it knows it is determining in that response to the prophetic man and his word his own future even his own eternity. He doesn't know it, he could be signing his own death card and setting in motion a judgment of God and the refusal to receive the man and the word because the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. They don't know what it is that they're ultimately rejecting and you cannot perform that rejection and get away with it.

There's got to be a consequence of a very serious kind and sometimes I'm moved by the Lord even to warn. In my last words I'll say I'm about to be followed now by the pastor. What he will say now is the critical moment which will reflect where he is, his maturity and so on and will determine his future, that of the church and his eternity.

So hold your breath because if he comes up with some glib, unctuous, thank you brother, nice to hear, we can always afford to hear what's wrong, he's very serious. But here again the issue of Israel heightens all issues and brings a heightened seriousness that God has always intended for the church but has been lost. The church that is light is a contradiction of the faith.

The word glory means weight so that we need to come into an increased high seriousness about what the church is and what we are about in the church and so the issue of Israel brings all these things to our consideration perhaps for the first time. That's why it's central and yet the accusation has been that we are off on a tangent because we are substituting Israel for Christ when the truth of the matter is this is the issue of Christ. He's the coming King but he's waiting, he's bound up in the heavens, Acts 321, if you have not noticed that scripture, critical.

He's confined in the heavens waiting for the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began. That God himself, the Lord himself has imposed upon himself a restriction. He's contained, self-contained, waiting for something to release him even as Israel is waiting for the set time to favor Zion.

What is he waiting for? The fulfillment of all the things spoken by the prophets of restoration of the Israel in the last days. So the King is coming, is contingent upon that restoration commencing and so you can't ask for more serious consequences of that. As long as he delays, how many more rapes and child molestations and murder, mayhem, genocidal acts of one race against another, even black against black in Rwanda and so on.

So long as the Lord's coming is hindered by the waiting for this restoration. So therefore it should be the foremost consideration for the church if it sees these things. Okay, gift of prophecy is like the gift of tongues, the gift of discernment, knowledge, miracles.

It can be exercised through any saint at the Lord's bidding. It's not something that you possess and it's not a calling. It's an operation of the Spirit severally as he will.

When it comes, we can have a prophecy of a personal kind or something of an issue before the church or an individual, that kind of thing. But it's not an office to whom God gives foundational responsibility and carries the vision of the ultimate purposes of God and is able to interpret the prophecies that relate to that in the context of the present time and the events taking place. That's an office.

The gift of prophecy is widespread, even though in many cases we can even question the validity of the gift because anybody out of his own soul can say, thus saith the Lord. In fact, I'm often saying God is not this redundant. He doesn't have all that much to say.

It's not required and so I'm a little bit suspicious of the frequency of this and the shallowness and the lightness of what is being conveyed. And that affects the condition of the church so that it does not even know or is able to discern between the gift and the office. I myself do not have the gift of prophecy, but there are a few occasions when it pleases the Lord to exercise it, but otherwise it's a rare thing for me.

Of all of the aspects of the spirit by which Jesus could have identified himself, and in Hebrews he's described as the high priest and the apostle of our confession, here it says the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. I'd love to hear anyone who has an insight, but this much I know that it's the issue of Jesus. It's what he is in himself.

There's a favorite word that I use. I often talk about the quintessence of something. The quintessence is the ultimate character of something reduced to the uttermost, the epitome, the heart of what it is in itself.

So I think that goes along with the amplified statement. What Jesus is in himself is the very essence, the quintessence of prophecy, of inspired preaching, of proclamation. We need to gain a greater sense of the word prophecy because often we just identify that as the foretelling of something in the future, but prophecy is a much deeper phenomenon in itself than mere foretelling.

It's a certain mentality, it's a mindset, it's a mode of being, it's a disposition, it's a certain quality of discernment, it's a certain reality. And the reason it's worth laboring over this is that whatever it is, it's what we are called to be as the church. Irrespective of whether we have this as a personal calling, the church in total as a corporate phenomenon is called to a prophetic identity, prophetic presence, and a prophetic service and conduct in the community in the world in which it is.

So therefore it behooves us to understand what is this, this prophetic nature, this essential thing which is the heart of Jesus himself. So the two elements that pick up on here is seeing and speaking. He sees as God sees.

I think the word Nabi in Hebrew is seer. The early prophets were called seers. In Ezekiel 37 the Son of Man could not prophesy, he could not speak for God as God until he first saw as God.

That's why he had to come down and out and into the condition as God sees it, mainly dry bones, because the tendency of men is always to gloss over and to see something in a better light than it in fact is. They want a happier, easier sense. We don't like grim things, but God's seeing is true seeing as the thing in itself is.

And so I often say you cannot speak for God until you first see as God sees. So, and then to be a mouthpiece for the Lord, what shall you say about that? That you're not giving an opinion, but this is God's own utterance, timed and appointed and in his authority. So what will God invest in vessels called to that responsibility that they should not transgress or usurp or take to themselves or enlarge or modify or any of

the kinds of temptations that come to men when they stand before God's people and exercise their calling.

So the issues of discipline, maturity, submission, and not in some ethereal way that is unrelated to submission to men is a critical factor. I think that often it's said that the apostle subsumes all of the fivefold callings. Paul can speak as a prophet and often does and giving vision in breadth and depth and in this kind of cry and then he can be the practical hands-on implementer in his apostolic authority and he can do the work of a teacher.

So I mean all those things are subsumed in him and I think here the prophetic aspect of the man is expressed in that cry. So if he's the statement, if he's the foundation upon which the church is to be built, what kind of a church is it to be? If it does not carry in itself the same essential character as is expressed through the apostle, that what do they call it, the superstructure has got to be in keeping with the foundation itself. So that's true, there's no conveying of the mystery to the church except that the message, the vision of the mystery comes through a foundational speaker, servant, who is sent from the throne of heaven and by men in the laying on of hands to bring a word that will turn that little Christian world upside down.

These are they that turn the world upside down and most of Christendom inhabits its own world, its own programs, its own little narrow prospect of religious success. That world has got to be turned upside down and a single word can do it, if it's the word sent and given of God. It's not only the word of God that needs to be communicated but the mood of God and the spirit of his speaking.

If you are impatient and you feel restricted and you want to gesticulate and make motions and use your voice and your personality and make the message more impressive, you will have lost it. If God wants you to be restricted to monotone, you're restricted and I'll tell you what, every word speaking like that which is so contrary to the way in which you're ordinarily used and the way in which you're constructed is itself a death. Every word is a death when you cannot speak it in the kind of vivid expression that your soul craves and thinks that would be appropriate to the word and it's death that works in us and life in you.

What is a prophet? It's one who is willing to bite the bullet and to experience the death in order that life can go forth. Therefore, what is required of the man? The man is the message. So I have to say that to the Pentecostal pastor in Brooklyn, with whom I'm having to do by the ordinance of God, who spoke out of the book of Hebrews on the rest of God and I could barely hear it.

It was painful to hear it. It was true, technically, but there was no corresponding life in that word and you can see it in the congregation sitting dully and unaffected. That's what goes on Sunday by Sunday by Sunday and I couldn't get out of the church fast enough and I said, Lord, unless you do something, I'm finished.

This is it. There's no possibility. We can go on, have my hand on the car door and the pastor comes around the church.

Brother Katz, don't leave. I want to take you to lunch. Uh-oh.

Okay, Lord. And so he closes up the church and we're walking the block and a half to the restaurant. I turned to him and I said, tell me, pastor, when you spoke the message of rest today, did you speak it out of the rest? I said, unless you yourself are the expression of the thing that is being conveyed to the congregation and the reality of your own life and experience, it's a word that will fall to the ground, which in

fact it did.

He didn't know that that was a requirement. When Marlene read what is the prophet, it has to do with preaching. Proclamation is the heart of prophetic reality, but it's not some kind of clinical, detached, abstract use of the word.

The prophet more than even the teacher has got to be the thing in himself and the prophetic community has got to be the thing in itself. And that's what requires the dealings of God. That's where anger comes in.

That's where suffering, that's where misunderstanding, that's where all of the tensions being crippled, that's all of the factors that God will employ for the shaping of the man and of the community, which for the want of a better word to sum up in one word, it's called suffering. It's the issue of the cross that Reggie was referring to. So maybe there are many called, but few are chosen.

Who wants this? And if you have a romantic and idealistic notion of what being a prophet is and you want the recognition, you're already a candidate for being a false prophet.

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