

On the Vocal Ministry

by Ruth M. Pitman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in the prophetic ministry and the characteristics of a true message, highlighting the role of the speaker and the hearer in creating a space for the vocal ministry to take place.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:28, 1 Corinthians 14:3-40, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Prophetic Ministry", "Guided Worship"

Description

Ruth M. Pitman preaches about the importance of a Meeting united in faith in the prophetic ministry, where individuals believe God speaks to them, guides them, and calls them to action. In such a Meeting, messages are carefully considered before being spoken, with the understanding that not every message is meant for everyone, but all are to be listened to with sensitivity and reverence. The speaker's identity is unimportant, as the focus is on the message being from God, not the individual. This type of Meeting can accept messages from anyone, even children or strangers, recognizing that God can speak through anyone, regardless of their understanding of the ministry.

Transcript

There is no Meeting so open, so tender, so free, so stable, as the Meeting that is united in faith in the prophetic ministry, in the belief that God speaks to man, calls him to action and leads him through it. While this belief is characteristic of certain "unprogrammed" portions of the Society, whose worship is rooted in it, it is known to Friends with programmed meetings as well, for the faith that God reveals Himself to man in time is a basic tenet of Friends in general, and is found throughout Christendom, though its practice differs from group to group.

It is understood in such a Meeting that any messages that are spoken strive to be God's word for these people at this time; that is, no one will speak unless he has prayerfully considered two questions: whether the message is God's or his own, and whether it should be given to these people now, or is for the individual alone.

To be sure, sometimes "the water tastes of the pipes". Our experiences, including what we have read and what we have memorized, are all a part of us; God can use what we are. On the other hand, we can be mistaken; some parts of our "pipes" dissolve all too readily into any passing fluid.

Because the Meeting knows the Source of true messages and knows that the speakers will "test themselves in the Light" before speaking, the hearers will listen with the deepest sort of sensitivity, even to a message with which they would normally disagree. No one dare think, "Oh, that's Tom riding his hobby-horse again."

Not every message is for you. Perhaps it will never be for you, but perhaps also it is something you will someday grow into. Rejoice if it rings true, but if it does not speak to your condition do not discuss it or dissect it.

The Meeting which is united upon this principle of the ministry can accept the messages of the child, the fool, the disturbed person, and the stranger worshipfully, as a natural thing, without any trace of condescension, for God can speak through these people too, even if they do not fully understand the basis of the ministry. Such a Meeting can absorb quantities of disturbance, because each worshipper lays what he hears reverently before the Lord with the unspoken prayer, "Show me how this is for me."

It is well for the speaker to stand. He should not be ashamed, and if he stands he is heard better and may be less inclined to ramble on. His identity is no secret, but at the same time it is unimportant; he will not be analyzed for what he says. The spoken message is not necessarily a key to the speaker's normal attitude or state of being. A depressed person can suddenly be filled with praise, and a hate-filled person can be granted a vision of love. It is not to be assumed that the former lives in constant awareness of God's presence or that the latter is a hypocrite. People do not crane their necks to see the speaker or make excited inquiries about who he is. He is judged only after many messages over a long period of time, and then never by one person alone. He is never praised or condemned for his message, for the message was God's, not his. A word of thanks from a person who has been helped or of gratitude for the faithfulness of the minister is the most that is in order, and this will be brief, without elaboration or discussion. To say more would be to tempt him to vanity.

Because the speaker knows he will not be questioned, or condemned, or tempted by praise to dizzy heights of self-importance, he is freed from most of his self-interest and self-concern. The testing of his message requires that he discipline himself strictly, but this should not kill the vocal ministry, for the hearers neither accept nor reject the message without weighing it very carefully in the same Light. This also gives the speaker freedom. Because of this freedom and reverence there is variety in the ministry. Two types of speaking we seldom hear assume their place beside and above the type of message we often hear. One may be called the testimonial, the "story" that praises God for His workings within the life of the individual. The other is vocal prayer, that delicate flower of worship, which is so near the limit of words that reference to it later is almost surely out of place.

Such a Meeting never turns into a debate. The word "debate" belongs to an entirely different level of life, one of reasoning and rationalizing, of self-assertiveness and self-defensiveness. Though the messages may point in the same direction, it would be as wrong to measure the Meeting by this as to judge a cake by its color or the weight of a board by its thickness. There may be wide diversity, even contradictions, in the messages, but they will be differences that enlarge our comprehension of Truth. See how the Eighth Psalm contrasts man's insignificance and his greatness within a firm framework of God's majesty and mercy: "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, ... what is man that thou art mindful of him ... ? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor.... Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ruth-m-pitman/on-the-vocal-ministry/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net