

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

Lutheran Renewal



Processing *Prophetic* Types

by Paul Anderson

Prophets pay high prices for life insurance. Their occupation puts them at risk. Their words don't endear them to their listeners, and they typically speak with disregard for cultural and religious values. Their personalities sometimes match the abrasive words they bring.

The priest remains part of the establishment, while the prophet points out the weakness of the status quo. The priest, protective of the people, represents them before God. The prophet, on the other hand, represents God to the people. He challenges the Church with the diplomacy of a marine sergeant. Few options exist—fight or switch.

Prophets come with no credentials; denominational headquarters definitely didn't send them. Agreeing with them reveals our guilt or negligence. So the priest goes back to the daily routine, and the prophet yells, "God wants your life, not your bull." The tension between God-ordained structure and spontaneous unstructured authority started millennia ago and continues to the present. Prophets see in black and white, while priestly types sees shadows of gray.

At our recent Holy Spirit Conference, two speakers gave prophetic messages that included a denunciation of where many of us in the church live. How we process these words depends upon where we are. If we are living on the edge, entertaining alternative structures for church life, the radical words of prophets don't sound all that

extreme. If we are living within the ecclesiastical structure with even a level of acceptance of where things are, the words will be jarring. These two groups come up with different answers to Ezekiel's question, "Can these dry bones live?" Some have long since left the desert, while others have hope of reforming the system. Enter the prophet.

Consider the following while evaluating a prophet's words:

1. You maybe thought that New Testament prophecy was marked by "*strengthening, encouragement and comfort,*" which it is (I Cor. 14:3). But sometimes building up must be preceded by tearing down so as not to be building on a shaky foundation. Tearing down is often viewed as reckless destruction, but it will be followed by construction.
2. Jesus remains the standard for all prophecy. "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev. 19:10). He stands above all as the greatest Prophet. And He did not shrink from blasting away at any religious values that stood in the way of the kingdom of God. He especially denounced the Pharisees for their utter disregard of either God or people in their zeal to keep the abusive religious system intact. On my latest reading of Jesus' harsh words, I found that many of them applied to our religious system today. Our reaction to the prophet may indict us. (*continued on page 4*)

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REFORMATION... REloaded!

“God blessed me so much at the Holy Spirit Conference and the entire week after it! He has filled my mind with His thoughts and words. He has replaced my negative self talk with words of encouragement! The Lord has been speaking to me, teaching me, directing me, and encouraging me this week after the conference - WOW!” (Washington)

“I have had tons of prayer and actually was told that I didn’t need deliverance, that what I had was just lingering, slumbering spirits. Not to worry. But those spirits were still there, constantly in my thoughts and feelings until—your workshop!! What a breakthrough for me!! What a blessing the prayer ministers were! (Minnesota)

(The workshop she is referring to is the deliverance workshop taught by George Johnson and assisted by Bob Wheelcor.)



The following is a prophetic dream received by Pastor Fred Thoni, longtime Lutheran Renewal leader. Fred received this dream a few weeks prior to the Holy Spirit Conference.

“I had a dream in which there were seven clouds overhead and each was “raining” a different kind of rain. As the rain came down, Francis and Judith MacNutt were out in the rain with an umbrella, dancing and singing joyfully in the rain like Gene Kelly. I believe the seven clouds are related to the historic seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in Revelation 5:12, “In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive POWER and WEALTH and WISDOM and STRENGTH and HONOR and GLORY and PRAISE!’” It is the great delight of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to have the Holy Spirit rain down these gifts to His beloved ones who gather around His throne to worship Him at the conference. We will be singing in the rain of God with Francis and Judith!”



REVISTEd!

From the Children's Conference: *One eleven-year-old shared with the entire children's chapel service how she and her friend had both really wanted to receive a heavenly prayer language and that they both had after praying with the adult prayer leaders. "Now," she added, beaming from ear to ear, "we call ourselves the prayer sisters!"*

From the Children's Conference: *One teacher commented that she loved leading the Godly Play Environment and at the end of story on Friday one little girl said "Please don't stop. Keep telling the story!"*



"Thank you for having such powerful speakers at the conference...We are not where the Father intended us to be, and we need to not only say the words Jesus said, but do what He told us to do. THANK YOU!" (Minnesota)

Upcoming Events

THE MINNESOTA ALPHA CONFERENCE
 November 3 & 4, 2006 • Hosanna! Lutheran Church • Lakeville, MN

Learn How Alpha Can Transform Your Church!
 REVITALIZE YOUR ALPHA TEAM! TRAIN NEW LEADERS! LAUNCH YOUR COURSE!

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Pre-Conference Bonus: *Alpha in the Workplace* • November 2, 2:30 - 8:00 pm

Register at www.alphausa.org or call 1-866-872-5742

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Equipping Conference

"A *Prophetic* Life With God—
 A *Prophetic* Lifestyle in the World"

February 9-10, 2007

With Graham Cooke and Michael Frost

Location: Arden Hills, MN

It did the Pharisees, who squirmed under the confrontational preaching of John the Baptist. I wouldn't want John for my pastor, but when I slide back into status quo comfort, I need him to speak to my surreal calm. He that has ears to hear, let him hear, and if we aren't listening, someone needs to shout. Apparently, most weren't able to hear the strong words of the Prophet Jesus to the churches of the Revelation. All but one had words of correction, and one was about to be spewed out.

3. Medically speaking, shock treatment is sometimes needed to recall bodily systems into service. In like manner, a sleeping Church must be awakened from slumber into its divinely appointed task. Our default mode predisposes us to do what we have always done. Our rites turn into ruts. We must be jarred into rethinking how we are operating. We have too often put it in cruise and moved along doing church business without any capacity to evaluate what we are doing, why we are doing it, and whether it is even close to working. Even what we think is working needs to be placed upon the altar, lest it become the new god, the latest fad, the most novel answer to what ails the Church.
4. Pastors often have problems being prophetic, even as prophets struggle to be pastoral. Consider some differences. These are generalizations, but they hold true in the majority of cases and help us to understand the built-in conflict:

Pastors

Protective
One place
Contextualize
Make people feel good

Evolutionary change
Now and then
Like to get close

The process
How people feel

Prophets

Confrontational
Mobile
Text is all that matters
Make people feel uncomfortable

Revolutionary change
Now, not then
Closer to God's heart than the peoples'

The bottom line
How God feels

5. Prophets and pastors have different but complementary callings.

Prophets are able to

- rouse a sleeping church.
- call the army to battle.
- bring conviction of sin.

Pastors are able to

- feed the flock over the long haul.
- process experience and put it in context.
- give a balance of grace and truth, with the tilt toward grace.

Pastors are often too nice to give the strong word that calls for change. They preach in a sanctuary, literally a "safe place," but it is not that safe if pastors are not wired to be dangerous, to bring their people to the radical edge. They are much better at comforting than challenging. By contrast, prophets must often use stark and harsh words, and even hyperbole, to move people from the passive center.

Jesus urged us to listen to prophetic words, promising that "anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward" (Matt. 10:41). Grace empowers us, but it must be balanced with truth, even corrective truth, so it is not reduced into mere sentiment.

On the other hand, prophets are human beings. They can fall into the same traps we are all subject to:

- **Presumption:** thinking they know when they don't; using their experience to evaluate the experience of others.
- **Oversimplification:** reducing an issue beyond truth.
- **Exaggeration:** making more of an issue than Jesus does or being needlessly reckless or culturally insensitive when unwarranted.
- **Frustration:** speaking out of reaction rather than pro-action, like Moses striking the rock.
- **Self-exaltation:** acting out of selfish pride.

Prophets speak according to their faith, and if their faith wanes, so will their words. If a prophet is operating in a reaction mode, we must be careful not to react to the reaction, because truth may be spoken even if the spirit is wrong.

May God give us wisdom and discernment in weighing prophetic words.

