

## The Pastor as Prophet

*“In seminary he had been taught that God had stopped any overt communication with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course, God’s voice had been reduced to paper and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by proper authorities and intellects. It seemed that direct communication with God was something exclusively for the ancients and uncivilized while educated westerner’s access to God was mediated and controlled by the intelligentsia. Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book especially an expensive one bound with gilt edges, or was that gilt edges.”<sup>1</sup>*

This quotation, from William Paul Young’s immensely popular, The Shack, betrays a common attitude toward the Scriptures and the Office of the Public Ministry. Both are portrayed as a means of controlling people. The best-seller continues by purporting to present a less control-oriented Word of God. The message of the book is conveyed in subsequent conversations that the main character has with the “Father,” the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The book is widely received as what God would say if He spoke today. In other words, William Young offers himself as a prophet. He speaks for God. He gives us the word of God in contemporary form.

Mr. Young is not alone in this trendy task. There have been any number of best-sellers claiming to speak for God. In Neal Donald Walsch’s Conversations with God, God speaks in culturally accommodated tones. Walsch jettisons Young’s literary forms and simply says that God spoke to him by controlling his pen on paper. This god is also intent on freeing us from the strictures of Scripture in order that we may feel the power within us. “The direct answer to your question,” God says, “is, yes, you may do as you wish without fear of retribution...There is nothing you cannot be, there is nothing you cannot do. There is nothing you cannot have.”<sup>2</sup>

I submit to you that your people are reading these books and others like them. They are subtly influenced by a spirit of progressive revelation. That is to say, satan is attacking the notion that the written Word of God is the sole norm of faith and life. It is popular to believe that God is speaking by various means, and if the message has been changed, (as demonstrated by the two examples above), all the better. God is expected to keep up with the times. Not surprisingly then, these new words from God are amazingly akin to current cultural norms.

In an age when false prophets threaten the Church from within it is well to recall the Lord’s promise of faithfulness, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:23)<sup>3</sup> Further, the Holy writer, Jude enjoins us to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) He even gives us a method to participate in that struggle. He tells us to follow the example of the archangel Michael. When he was contending with satan, “he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’” (Jude 9) What I am suggesting, dear brothers, is that you follow this example. In your struggle for the faith your personal judgment on men or events of our time is not significant. Rather, you speak the Word of the Lord in judgment against them, and for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Boldly stated, false prophets must be opposed by true prophets speaking God’s Word. It is my contention that Pastors are to be true prophets.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, William Paul The Shack page 65. Windblown Media 2007

<sup>2</sup> Walsch, Neale Donald Conversations with God pp 42, 44. Putnam 1995

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture texts from ESV, Good News Publishers.

## **I. God uses prophets to convey His Word to the World.**

### **A. The prophet speaks God's Word.**

Let's spend a few moments to examine the work of the prophets. God has spoken by His prophets. He has given us the Gospel, once for all delivered to the saints. The prophet of God speaks the Word of God that has been given to him. This transaction is announced throughout the Old Testament. The phrase, "Thus says the Lord," preceding or following a pronouncement from a prophet appears over 400 times. "Declares the Lord" occurs over 300 times, and "the Word of the Lord came," (to this or that prophet) is used over 100 times. The prophet of God is bold to state that he is speaking God's Word.

The New Testament assumes the written nature of the Word of God. The phrase, "It is written," (64 NT, 26 Gospels, 21 Jesus), is used with binding force. Furthermore, the apostles themselves recognize the nature of what they are writing, (I Thessalonians 2:13, II Peter 3:15-16), as the Word of God. Paul understands the proclamation of the Word of God as his ministry. He says, that he "became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known..." (Colossians 1:25)

The problem of distinguishing between a false prophet and a true prophet remains. The Scripture offers two criteria by which the problem may be solved. The first is that whatever the prophet says must be true, or come about. (Deuteronomy 18:22). The second is that whatever the prophet says must testify to the one holy Gospel of Jesus. (Deuteronomy 18:18, Galatians 1:6-8, Acts 10:43)

This is too brief a summary to do the topic justice but it will suffice for the purposes of this paper. The prophet speaks the truth of God's Word. He does not necessarily predict future events. Although the proclamation of the Word of God will in some way have bearing on the future of those who hear it, the primary function of the prophet is to proclaim God's Word.

### **B. The prophet lives God's Word.**

It is interesting to note that the prophets not only spoke the Word of God, they also lived it. They certainly lived the life of faith. They also acted out certain portions of the Word of God to demonstrate its liveliness for its hearers. For example, Moses carries the Word of God down from the mountain displaying that God comes to men with His Word, Jeremiah walks around with a yoke on his neck to demonstrate the yoke of Babylon, Ezekiel builds a model of Jerusalem and lays on his side to imitate the siege of Jerusalem, and Hosea marries a prostitute to suffer the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel. These actions, commanded by God, become powerful means of "speaking" God's Word.

### **C. The prophet is given by God to Church and world.**

What God has to say, He says to the whole world. (John 3:16) The action of Jesus, the living Word is for the redemption of the world. So the spoken Word is also for the world. When He sends out His prophets they do not limit their audience to those who already know Him. The prophets speak to, and about, both the Church and the rest of the world.

Sometimes the prophets pronounce judgment on the unbelieving world as well as the Church. (Amos 1-2) Sometimes they give moral guidance. (Jonah 3) Sometimes they seek to explain the state of world or local affairs. (Isaiah 8, 45) God uses His prophets to speak to the Church and the world whether they listen or not.

## **II. The Word of God imposes order on chaos for the sake of salvation.**

### **A. The power of God's Word to create order is seen in creation.**

The world is groaning in travail due to the devastation of sin. God established order by the power of His Word in creation, (Isaiah 45:18), but it continues to be disrupted by sin. (Romans 8:21) He establishes spiritual order through Jesus. (Ephesians 1:10) This too is under attack. (Ephesians 6:12) The force seeking to bring chaos against the orderliness of God's word is satan, who with his lies and deception counters what God has said. (John 8:44)

The Hydra-like emanations of this chaos wreak a terrible impact on human-kind. We are able to observe it not only in the physical cataclysms of our world but in the disorder of daily human life. For many people, believer and unbeliever alike, life is confusing, chaotic, disorderly and disheartening. What often passes for "spirituality" in today's parlance is really a search for some kind of order, some way to make sense out of life and events in the world. People are willing to stop listening to the truth and wander after myths. (II Timothy 4:4) (In an absolutely bizarre twist, satan has foisted the chief myth of the day upon us in the form of the theory of evolution, which offers up chaos, [i.e. the random forces of nature], as the means of establishing order.) The people are suffering for the lack of a Word of God. (Proverbs 29:18) They will grasp at anything to live, even in a facade of order.

### **B. It establishes an objective truth.**

God speaks truth. (John 17:17) His Word is in direct opposition to the words of satan. The concept of an absolute truth is, by satan's design, foreign to the ears of many. (II Timothy 4:3) satan's chaotic words have reached their apex when the culture conveys the idea that each individual creates his own truth. The Scripture claims to be an absolute, objective truth. No circumstantial truth, no personal truth can create the kind of order necessary for the salvation of men. God's Word can create salvation for all men precisely because it is truth. In all falsehood there is bondage, but in truth there is freedom. (John 8:32)

### **C. It destroys falsehood.**

The conflict between the Word of God and the words of satan is portrayed in dramatic images throughout the Scripture. Light over darkness, life over death, wisdom over foolishness, eternal over temporary, and order over chaos are all pictures used to describe the same basic battle between truth and falsehood. Falsehood works in the dark to hide and cover up. Truth works in the light so that it may expose and make known. (Hebrews 4:10, John 3:19-20)

### **D. It provides a framework for understanding reality.**

By establishing the method of truth, and by exposing the chaos of falsehood, the Word of God does what no other word can do. It creates a durable order. Much more could be said here about the physical order established by the three institutions of authority that God has given. The home, the government and the Church are gifts of God for the sake of order. They are parameters for the gifts of vocation so that every human being is given a place to fit within God's good order. In these actions the Word of God builds a framework for human beings to understand reality. The answer to every possible circumstance may not be readily apparent, but when chaos pokes its ugly head into the door of our lives through trauma, catastrophe, and ruin God has provided a refuge. We walk by faith, not by sight. So we can truly say that because we believe, we see. In this there is great comfort.

This is an often overlooked basic human need. We refuse to admit this need because it requires an admission that we are not in control. If original sin can be described in a word it is the desire for control, to be god. We rage against those moments when we feel we are not in control. Thus it is unlikely that we will be able to recognize our need for someone to order the world for us. Nonetheless, it is a basic need. Every human being needs someone to help them overcome the dysfunction brought into their lives by sin. Unbelievers refuse to admit this until the Word of God convinces them. Believers, while confessing it, must have it constantly reinforced.

**E. This order allows the Word to be heard so that it creates and nurtures faith.**

The order the Word of God imposes on the physical world and on the lives of those who live in it doesn't exist simply for the sake of order. It is for the sake of the Gospel. When people's lives are governed by chaos, when they cannot make sense out of what is happening in their lives or in the world, it may be more difficult for them to hear the Gospel. For example, those who live in a state of war or poverty may be most concerned with physical survival. They think they have little time or energy to invest spiritual matters.

No amount of human reasoning can expose their need for salvation. Only the Word of God can do that. Believers and unbelievers alike must hear the Word of God spoken and applied to their life circumstances. Unbelievers need to hear it to create faith. Believers need to hear it to sustain faith. This is the order of salvation. It underlies, fills, informs and supersedes all other forms of order.

**III. The Pastor as prophet.**

**A. The Pastor speaks God's Word.**

Some would argue that the prophetic office no longer exists. I find the argument unconvincing. The parallels between the Pastoral and Prophetic office are too tightly drawn by the Scriptures. It is clear that the Word of God must be proclaimed. It must be applied to people's lives in such a way that it creates faith. There is no other means of bringing them to salvation. For this reason I contend that the Pastoral office does have a prophetic aspect. This thesis has profound implications regarding how we think of the office of the public ministry.

Who is it that speaks God's Word to the Church and to the world today? The Pastor does. *"To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this."*<sup>4</sup> These words from Article V of the Augsburg Confession follow the article on justification. This chief article explains that we are saved only by God's grace through faith in Jesus. Article V then follows up by describing how God oversees the communication of this faith to the world. In order that we may obtain this faith God instituted the office of the ministry. It happens through the Pastor. In other words, God uses the Pastor to speak His Word just as we have seen He used the prophets.

Unfortunately, this aspect of the Pastor's duty to God has been degraded, diminished and despised, not only by the hearers, but by the very ones who are to be speaking God's Word. The

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<sup>4</sup>Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (31). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

words we use for this act, “sermon” and “preaching” are often used with derogation, as in “I don’t need a sermon,” or, “Stop preaching at me.” Perhaps this is because we have made more of the office than of the Word. Congregations tend to think of the “Pastor’s sermon”. They are fond of saying, “He’s a good preacher”...or not. Somehow the reality of the Pastor speaking God’s Word to his people has been lost. In stead of God’s Word, most people focus on the Pastor’s words. Even the term “sermon” is misleading. Its Latin root refers to either normal conversation or to a learned discourse. Neither of the two meanings reflect what is actually transpiring.

It may not be entirely the people’s fault. I am not sure whether Pastors approach this holy territory with the proper amount of fear and dread. To presume to speak God’s Word is an awesome task. It is no wonder that the assignment is often downgraded. Too often the sermon is thought of as a burden- “I have to say something.” In many places sermons become 10 minutes of entertainment, self-actualization exercises, moralizing appeals, appeasement of the angry crowd, or worse, of self-aggrandizement.

Brothers, this is not what we believe, teach, and confess about the Pastoral office. God has created the office, and called you into it so that His Word of the Gospel may be proclaimed in boldness and confidence. He is speaking through you. If He is not, then the exercise of the sermon, or any other teaching opportunity, is of no account. If it is not His Word that you are speaking, then no one can be saved by it. Conversely, if someone can be saved by what you are saying, then it is His Word and not your own.

I am not suggesting that this is the only activity with which God charges Pastors. Certainly the Pastor cares for His sheep in a variety of ways. I am saying that the office is created primarily for the proclamation of the Gospel. God has called you to speak His Word.

### **B. The Pastor lives God’s Word.**

It is interesting that God calls Pastors to specific actions whereby the Word is placed among His people in physical ways. As the prophets lived God’s Word in actions so does the Pastor. I am not suggesting in any way that the actions of the prophets have sacramental status. Their actions are not commanded as the sacraments are. But the analogy is clear. God speaks also through specific actions to make His Word present among us.

What are the sacraments if they are not the Word of God lived among His people? “Do this,” He tells us. So, in the action of Baptism God’s Word is lived by the Pastor to bring the life of faith into existence. In the action of the Lord’s Supper God’s Word is lived by the Pastor to offer forgiveness, life and salvation. In the action of Absolution God’s Word is lived by the Pastor in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are powerful means of proclaiming the Gospel.

### **C. The Pastor is God’s gift to congregation and community.**

The fifth article of the Augsburg Confession recognizes that the office of the public ministry is given by God to both the Church and to the world. The Latin translation makes this a little clearer. Again, having just declared, in Article IV, that we are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, Article V continues by saying, “In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted.”<sup>5</sup> The subject of this sentence, those who need to obtain this faith, the “we” can only refer to all sinners. To

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<sup>5</sup> Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (31). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

state it plainly, in order that this faith may be made available to the world through the proclamation of the Gospel, God established the Pastoral office. God has given you to both your congregation and your community so that the Word of God may be heard.

I will speak later of the public aspect of the Pastoral office. Here let me note that believer and unbeliever alike may listen to your sermons and other teachings. You are speaking the same Word for both the creation and the nurturing of faith. When it comes to the sacraments a distinction must be made. Unbelievers may see the sacraments administered by you even though they may not participate. We should take care to make sure they see them as the power of God's Word and not as a cultural rite of passage. Baptism, for example, is not just something that everyone does for their babies. It is the Word of God being lived for the sake of the faith of that child. As the prophets of old boldly proclaimed God's Word, applying it to the specific circumstances of the day, so also you are called to proclaim God's Word to the Church and to the world.

#### **IV. The Prophet speaks God's Word to the Church.**

##### **A. God's people need to hear the Word.**

Even though believers have been cleansed from their sin by the holy blood of Jesus they are at the same time sinners. That means that sin still brings its disorderliness into their personal lives. How often don't you suffer when you look at the mess that your people have created for themselves because of their sin? Left unchecked this sin constantly bears the seeds of unbelief. (James 1:14-15) For this reason believers continually need to hear God's Word.

Furthermore, satan will bring disorder into the lives of believers through his activities in the world. Without in any way suggesting that they are innocent, we recognize that satan attacks people apart from their personal sin. A tragic car accident, the death of a child in a war, random violence in our own country and a myriad of other examples are capable of creating confusion, disorder, and disillusionment in the lives of believers. Haven't you wondered why a certain family is visited with one tragedy after another? They need to hear the Word of God applied to their specific situation to make sense of it all.

Here let me suggest a trinity of modes you may consider when you think about proclaiming the Word of God for the sake of order in the lives of your people. God has given creation to man for the sake of his life and ultimately for the sake of salvation. (Genesis 1:28-31, II Peter 1:3) Sometimes it may not seem like this is true. Sinners often question whether God cares, or even whether He is capable of providing for their needs or the needs of others. In these circumstances the Pastor, as prophet, proclaims the order of provision. "Why does poverty affect our lives and the lives of so many in our world?" "How are we to think when we lose a job, a home, or a loved one?" Such questions provide evidence of the effect of disorder with regard to how God the Father provides for them. Only the Word of God can restore order and help them recognize God's good gifts.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, died and rose to redeem the entire world, to pay the price for all sin, for all people, for all time. Yet sometimes it may not seem like forgiveness is forthcoming. Sinners often question whether God actually does forgive them. They see so little forgiveness demonstrated in this world that true forgiveness seems distant and unattainable. In these circumstances the Pastor, as prophet, proclaims the order of forgiveness. "I don't know if I am truly forgiven." "I cannot forgive that person for what he has done to me." "People who have committed horrendous crimes can never be forgiven." Such statements demonstrate

confusion in regard to how God the Son has created forgiveness. Only the Word of God can assure them of all Jesus has done.

God has sent His Holy Spirit to be present in and care for His children. Yet, sometimes it seems like God is far away. Sinners often question whether God is near and active in their lives. In these circumstances the Pastor, as prophet, proclaims the order of presence. “Am I doing any good works?” If I am, why am I doing good works?” “How is it that some unbelievers seem to be doing more good works than believers?” Such questions belie a loss of order in regard to the continued presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Only the Word of God can assure them that God is at work in the world and in their lives.

### **B. The Pastor is in a unique position to provide order for his people.**

God has provided His Word to clarify His orderly work in each of these modes. He has provided the Pastor to proclaim this Word to His people. No one can do this like the Pastor. He has a unique relationship with his people. This service of God cannot be supplied by a distant television personality. The Pastor knows his people. He knows every facet of their world because he lives in it with them. He knows the details of their lives because He is involved on a personal level. He is a part of God’s provision of order because He is the one given to proclaim that order. He loves His people because he knows that God has given them to each other. He sees their sin in gory detail. He also knows that they are beloved children of God.

Providing a Pastor, a shepherd, for every congregation of His people is part of God’s plan to make sure that the world does not descend into absolute chaos. (Matthew 5:13) The Pastor is capable of applying God’s Word to the lives of his people in a manner that no one else can. Since he is involved in their lives he knows their personal problems. Since he lives in their town or community he is aware of the specific tactics of satan in that part of the world. And by paying attention to what is happening in the world he can track the effects of world events on his people.

Here the Pastor functions as prophet. What does God say about what you are going through, about what is happening in this town and in the world? This is how the Pastor speaks to his people. Certainly, these issues are to be addressed in personal counseling, and in teaching. They must be addressed in the sermon. It is obvious that the most personal of issues cannot be revealed in the sermon with specificity. But the Pastor, as prophet, will find ways to address the varied disorder that satan has brought into the lives of his people. When he speaks in this way he does so for the sake of the Gospel because it has the power to save people from their sin.

A simple qualification is in order at this juncture. I am not suggesting that the sermon is of the same nature as the Scripture. I am suggesting that the sermon must be so tied to the Word of God that the preacher, having said “Amen” may also say of the sermon as a unit, “Thus saith the Lord.” So, Luther, in his discussion of the Third Commandment, calls listening to the sermon a hearing of God’s Word. “Therefore this commandment is violated not only by those who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day... but also by that multitude of others who listen to God’s Word as they would to any other entertainment, who only from force of habit go to hear preaching and depart again with as little knowledge of the Word at the end of the year as at the beginning.”<sup>6</sup> As God’s Word imposes order on the elements of creation so the sermon should grant divine order to the lives of its hearers, that they may be saved.

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<sup>6</sup>Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (378). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

## **V. The Prophet speaks God's Word to the world.**

### **A. The world needs to hear the Word.**

The unbelieving world is every bit as much in conflict with Christ's Holy Church today as it was in the days of the Old Testament prophets. Unbelievers live in an approximate chaos. The only reason theirs is not an absolute chaos is the great mercy of God at work in His creation and through His people. Absolute chaos awaits them. They know only the falsehoods that satan foists upon them. Even the truths of the created order, (math, science etc.) are tainted by the idolatries of this world. These people, also precious to their creator, need to hear of the orderliness of truth. It is God's means of their salvation.

### **B. The Pastor is in a unique position to provide order to the community.**

Once again the prophetic example may be instructive with respect to the activities of the Pastor. We do not often think of the Pastor as having been given by God to the community in which he serves. I hope, by this paper, to cause you to question this assumption. In the same way that God places a Pastor in a specific location with a specific people of God, so He places a Pastor in that place for the sake of the unbelieving world. He knows the town or community. He recognizes the impacts of world events on this people group. His ministry is unique because there is no other people quite like those among whom he has been placed. He has a presence among these people. Even though they are not his sheep he will develop some measure of care for their well-being. And they, to one degree or another, acknowledge his presence and care.

They also, need to hear of the order of provision, of forgiveness and of presence. God has placed the Pastor in a unique position to deliver the Word they need. The question is how to deliver it. The goal will be to bring them into God's house where they can hear the sermon in the context of the Divine Service, and receive the sacraments. But work may be necessary in other settings to bring some of them to that point.

For example, your very presence at activities within the community does lend order. Haven't you noticed that people often hold their tongue because a Pastor is present? That tiny bit of order is significant. You may also speak to the people of your community through public media. Think of writing editorials in the local newspaper as a way of proclaiming the Gospel. There are ways that Pastors can get on the local radio or television. What you say on your website ought not simply be an advertisement. It is a way of speaking the Gospel to the world. These, (and I hope you can think of many creative others), are prophetic venues not available to previous generations, but ones that should be exploited for the sake of the Gospel today.

## **VI. A prophetic Church is a public Church**

### **A. The office of the public ministry functions for Christ on behalf of the people.**

One issue remains. How is the Pastor to order the relationship of his proclamation of the Gospel to the Church and to the world? Here the Augsburg Confession is again instructive. "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."<sup>7</sup> The word "public" is extremely important in this context. It means, "on behalf of the people." We believe teach and confess that the Pastoral office is a public office. The Pastor is able to function on behalf of his people by virtue of his call.

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<sup>7</sup>Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (36). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

The Pastor serves God because the call to serve as Pastor is issued by God. But since the means of delivering that call is the congregation the Pastor also serves his people. And, since it is a public office everything the Pastor does, he does as a servant of both God and the people. Lay- members of the congregation, even though part of the priesthood, do not serve in this capacity.

The Pastor serves God, as far as the parameters of this paper are concerned, by proclaiming the truth of His Word. The Pastor serves his people in precisely the same way, by proclaiming God's Word. We have already covered this public proclamation to the Church. Where the task becomes a little sticky is the public service of the Pastor to the unbelieving world.

The issue of the Pastor in the public arena has a storied history in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Much of the controversy hinges on whether the Pastor is able to function as a prophet. If the Pastor is given an opportunity to speak in a public setting in which he can make a clear proclamation of Jesus Christ as the only name given among men by which we are to be saved, and that in His name alone there is comfort at the time of tragedy, no one in the LCMS should object. (Here I am ignoring other problems that circumstances of mixed confessions may create.) But it is very easy to abandon the prophetic office and instead play the role of a community counselor. The effort to make people feel good can never substitute for the proclamation of the Gospel for the sake of their souls. Dear brothers, I submit to you that if you find yourselves in a public setting where others are praying in the name of their preferred savior and the best you can muster is to pray in the name of Jesus, you shouldn't be there.

This will require wisdom. I am not suggesting that on every public occasion you should be as bold as the Old Testament prophets. You, as the local Pastor, since you alone know the factors influencing your community, can make the decision as to when such a proclamation would be beneficial and when it would be detrimental. I am pleading for equal boldness in declining public opportunities when a forthright proclamation of the Gospel might not be the best tactic for the overall work of the Kingdom of God.

#### **B. The office of the public ministry functions for Christ on behalf of the truth.**

It may be possible to say that the Pastor serves not only the people but also the truth itself. The truth of the Gospel, which is the summary of all truth, (II Peter 1:3), must be proclaimed. (Matthew 24:14) As we contend on behalf of the Gospel, and the level of persecution rises, there will be pressure to apply a Gnostic technique. The Pastor is not the guardian of secret truths. The Pastor, as prophet, is a proclaimer of the mysteries of God. Since he functions on behalf of the people he is most visible in telling the Good News of the Kingdom.

Because this happens in the public setting one more caveat is in order. As the prophets of old courageously pointed out error so does the Pastor today. It is not enough to say, "This statement is true." Our world functions with such a loose interpretation of truth that most people are capable of holding two logically exclusive concepts in their minds as if they were both true. Consequently, it is important for the Pastor, as prophet, to also expose that which is false. The Confessions serve as a model in this duty. The formula of, "this we teach and this we condemn" serves the Pastor well. This formula also assists the Pastor to maintain a demand for pure doctrine while refraining from personal attack.

#### **Conclusion- God still speaks through the office of the Public Ministry.**

Accommodated by communication technology, false prophets abound in the twenty-first century. They can be found on national television and radio. They write oft visited blogs. They

publish books. They steal the souls of millions. On a smaller scale the popularity of an eclectic spirituality creates false prophets on every street corner. In a world where it is perfectly acceptable for each individual to choose elements of various faith systems to create their personal “spirituality” it is common to find people mixing Christianity with other world religions. This outgrowth of post-modernism ends in an extreme individualism. It strikes at the heart of an objective, enduring truth.

The proper response is not to wring our hands in despair over the loss of respect for Pastors, the Church, or the Word of God. The proper response is, as it always has been, to boldly proclaim the truth. A sense of the Pastor as prophet will assist this healthy response.

SDG

Terry Forke

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Matthew 7:15, 24;11 Beware of false prophets  
 11:9 Yes, and more than a prophet  
 13:57 Prophet without honor in his own country  
 14:5, 46, 21:11 People held Jesus to be prophet  
 23:34 Jesus- "I send you prophets, some of whom you will kill."  
 Luke 4:27 Elijah the prophet sent to unbeliever Naaman and widow of Zarapheth  
 13:33 Jesus says the prophet dies in Jerusalem, referring to himself.  
 24:44 Everything written about Jesus in law and prophets fulfilled  
 John 7:40 This really is the prophet. Of Jesus  
 Acts 3:22 Moses said God will raise a prophet like me  
 10:43 To Jesus all the prophets bear witness  
 11:27,13:1,15:32,21:10 NT era prophets  
 Romans 16:26 Prophetic writings  
 I Cor 12,13,14 NT era prophets  
 14:32 spirits of the prophets subject to the prophets  
 Eph 4:11 God gives prophets  
 James 5:10 Prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, examples of suffering.  
 I Pet 2:1 False prophets bring destructive heresy "secretly" Public nature of office  
 1:11-12 OT prophets serving NT people

Deut 13:1 True prophet points to triune God  
 18:15-22 Prophet speaks only words God gives, only of triune God,  
 His words come about.

Hosea 12:10, 13 Prophet speaks, prophet lives God's Word  
 Jeremiah 1:5 I appointed you prophet to the nations  
 Jeremiah 5 False prophets exposed  
 Jeremiah 23 Lying prophets exposed  
 Ezekiel 2:7 You shall speak my words, whether they hear or refuse to hear

#### Action Prophecies

Moses Carries the Word of the Lord down to the people  
 Jeremiah  
 19 Buys a pottery flask and breaks it- God will break this people  
 27 Yoke on his neck- to nations re: the yoke of Babylon  
 32 Buys a field- property will again be bought  
 Ezekiel  
 4 Model of Jerusalem lays on side days of siege  
 12 Carries baggage- symbol exile  
 24 No mourning when wife dies- trust in the Lord  
 Hosea  
 1 Marries prostitute

Declares the Lord 300+ Says the Lord 400+ Word of the Lord came 100+

"it is written" 64 times in NT, 26 in Gospels,