

Lenten Scripture Update: March 2024. St Wilfrid's Scripture Group: Introduction To The Prophets in Lent

The Northern Kingdom Prophets: Israel

Amos, Hosea , 1st Isaiah

Assyrian invasion took people off to their Empire 780B.C.

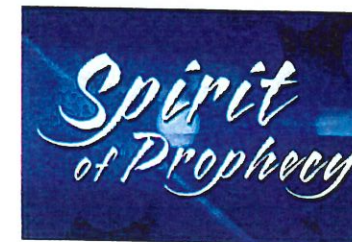
The people were scattered over many countries

The Southern Kingdom Prophets: Judah

Jeremiah , Ezekiel, 2nd Isaiah , 3rd Isaiah, Micah

Babylonian invasion took people off to Babylon 587 BC

These Exiles stayed mostly in Babylon



The purpose of the prophets was to tell the people of the Covenant (Old Testament Israel and Judah) God's words; i.e. how they should live, what they were doing wrong and what will happen to them if they don't live according to the rules of the Covenant. A very small proportion of their prophecy was about forecasting the future, only about 5%.

It is amazing that such early writing even survives today let alone the very advanced nature of the humanity of the law they were advocating. The poetry and imagery of the prophets too, is some of the best literature we have. It is a testament to the power of their words to speak to many generations since them. They were re-written and survived many editors' pens, as they were copied onto various scrolls. It's disputed when the final version of the Old Testament was finalised in the version we have today.

The prophets were concerned with what we'd call today social justice issues: the care of orphans and widows, care for the poor, the selling of people "for the price of a pair of sandals", slavery and freedom, observing regulations regarding the freedom of slaves, financial observations such as no interest debts and the writing off of debt after 7 years. The most significant social justice prophets were Hosea, Amos and Micah. During Lent this year we have 2 prophets in the Sunday readings: Jeremiah and 2nd Isaiah.

Prophecy Today

At Baptism and Confirmation, we are anointed to be Priests, Kings and Prophets. We call on the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to make us holy, to serve and speak God's word.

We can recognise the spirit of prophecy in people such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, David Attenborough. People who guide humanity in great issues of our time in a way that guides us into a deeper understanding of God's creation and his purpose for humanity.

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8

- St Paul calls prophecy the second charism which builds the Church
- The stories of the prophets and Jesus tell us that when we are wounded and marginalised the suffering can teach us and we can become prophets and speakers of truth.
- Those who are on the borders of society feel the injustice and inequalities and can speak from their experience, which is often uncomfortable to those who have not experienced such things as poverty, homelessness and prejudice and unfair discrimination.
- Jeremiah's hard, lonely life helped him to build inner resilience. When we face pain distress and hardship, instead of giving up we can draw energy and clarity to face challenges knowing God's loving presence is near. We can experience this through prayer and reflection, sacraments and Christian community support.
- God offers us quiet contemplative eyes. He calls us to be active in the sufferings of the world. As Christians we take our example from Jesus who spent time in contemplation and prayer and went out to do his Father's work.
- Examples of prophetic activities of the Catholic Church are:
CAFOD, Shelter, Foodbank, Catholic education, St Vincent's housing Association, SVP...
Can you name other examples of prophetic activity in our own parish?
In society in Britain? On the world stage?

Prophecy Today:

"We find God in ourselves and we find ourselves in God"
St Teresa of Avila.



Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue
"I have come to set the captives free".

"Prophets do not have to be highly educated, powerful, or well-known: They are everyday people perched at the edge of the inside of our institutions, distant enough to critique injustice but close enough to be heard. Prophets are free to offer alternatives grounded both in love for God and our faith traditions."

Fr. Richard Rohr OFM (Founder of the Centre for Contemplation and Action)

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8