

SERMON: December 9, 2018 Second Sunday in Advent PROPHECY
TEXT: Jeremiah 31:31-34
SUBJECT: Living in prophecy
THEME: Prophecy is about knowing God, and living so that His will lives through us.
PURPOSE: To raise up people willing to be prophets
PIC: Sunlight streaming through clouds

Rick Warren, author of “The Purpose-Driven Life” talks about when his dad died. Rick had spent the evening with him the night before, and the next day he was on the way to the hospital but he didn’t arrive in time. He got there just after his father had passed.

But one of the attendants who was there saw Pastor Rick and told him what his father’s last words were.



Pastor Rick Warren
2 hours ago
WHY I DO WHAT I DO - THE THEME OF MY LIFE
If my father was still alive, this week he would have celebrated his 95 birthday. Dad was my first mentor and the most influential man in my life -even shaping my destiny with his final, dying word... See More



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And Rick said, “I knew the moment that I heard it that those were indeed my father’s last words.”

How could Rick know? How could he, without being there, know what the last thing his father said was? How could he know whether or not the person who told it to him wasn’t just making it up?

Because he knew his father so well that, when he heard those words, he knew that that was exactly the kind of thing that his father would say. It couldn’t be made up. They weren’t just casual words – it was indeed what his father was about.

If you go out to lunch with Kim and me sometime, I can tell you what my wife is going to order to drink. She’s going to order Diet Coke with lime.



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How do I know this? Am I predicting the future?

In a sense, yes. But the only reason I can do it is because I know my wife. We have spent 36 years getting to know each other. And even though I can catch her off-guard occasionally, she can also reasonably predict how I am going to react to some occasion.

A lot of people misunderstand “prophecy”. They think it’s predicting the future. But that’s not what prophecy is at all –

Like Rick Warren with his father, like me and my wife, when you know somebody that well and that intimately, you know what they will do.

That, my friends, is what true prophecy is. It sounds like predicting the future, but what prophecy really is is knowing God’s heart so well that you can see what God is doing.

We are celebrating this time of Advent, and our focus today is on Prophecy.

PREPARATION
PROPHECY
PEOPLE
PLACE
PRESENCE

Last week was “Preparation”, next week will be “People”, the fourth week will be “Place”, and finally, on Christmas Eve, we will celebrate the “Presence” of God. (Not PRESENTS, PRESENCE!)

The prophecy today comes from Jeremiah, at a time when things were pretty bad for the people of Israel.

Like we saw last week, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were contemporaries. Whereas Ezekiel was in Babylon, Jeremiah was allowed to stay in Judah. He got to see first-hand how devastated the people were by the conquest of Babylon.

Jeremiah is called “The weeping prophet” because so much of his writing is sadness. He saw the city torn down, the people exiled, the land fall into ruin. The government was a puppet of Babylon, and their faith struggled to survive.

But here, in the midst of this, Jeremiah receives a word from God. This is a radical departure from most of his work, but that in itself indicates that this is from God.

Listen to these words –

31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

I was asking our group on Wednesday about the “saints” that they have known – people that are deep in the faith; people that seem to know God’s heart.

You can probably think of some yourself – people that you can go to when you are having a difficult time, and the words that they speak bring you comfort. Even if it’s a word that you don’t really want to hear, you find comfort in knowing that it is from God.

I can think of a couple people throughout my lifetime who I believe are hearing from the Lord. Miss Ivah, 102 years old, who when I would go to visit her I would always feel deeper and richer for having just been in her presence.

One of our group said that, when he left for work at 5:30 in the morning, he could count on the light being on at his pastor’s house, where this man of God was reading the scripture and praying.

Someone else related the story of a man they know here, a retired man, who even though he can’t get around much anymore, he is always praying for the youth of our community.

There are other stories – a friend who always makes you feel better, just by being in their presence. Someone else, who was described as “a confident and complete Christian.”

I asked the group what made them that way. ***How does one become a prophet?***

Some people think that pastors and other saints of God are born that way, that they have some kind of innate spirituality that makes them more focused on God than ordinary people have.

But the truth is, I am not any more holy than anybody else here. I don't have a special "spiritual gene" that makes me more in tune with God than you are.

With all of the people we were describing as "prophets" or "saints", one thing that stood out was that these people spent time with God!

The more time you spend with someone, the better you get to know them. Oh, I suppose that you can spend years not talking and just co-existing in the same room together, but for people in a vital marriage and a loving relationship, you get to know each other.

That's how it is with God – each of these people made time in their schedule to be with God. Reading the Bible, spending hours in prayer, communing with other Christians and going out to try to do God's work.

Great musicians don't become that way without hours of practice and sacrifice to hone their craft. Great athletes may have some innate skill, but all of that skill is worthless if they don't spend time in the gym and out on the practice field, hitting and running and throwing the ball.

Great prophets become that way because they start with a desire to know God – and they put in the time to get to know Him.

But there was something else that we all noticed on Wednesday that was needed in order for someone to become a great prophet – great suffering.

Jeremiah saw the destruction of his homeland and his people. The people we spoke of had all had deep pain in their life.

But there was something else to it – many people have pain; many people read the Bible; but it was the combination of these things plus something else – that willingness to believe that, in spite of what the evidence tried to tell us, God is still a loving God who wants for us to share eternity with Him!

I believe that is what it takes to become a prophet

- ***A personal experience with the living God that re-orders your life***
- ***A commitment of getting to know God through Bible reading and prayer time and serving with others;***

- ***And a choice to continue to believe God even when the evidence is to the contrary.***

I sometimes wonder why we don't see more prophets of God today – Lord knows that we need them!

But then I have to ask myself – “Am I putting the time in to get to know God's heart?”

Who will be the next prophet of God? In a world that keeps trying to appropriate God's name to its own agenda of the month, in a system that wants to preach only half the Gospel and use the other half as a weapon against those who disagree with us, where are the true prophets of God?

I'll tell you where the next prophet of God is – you are right here in this church. It doesn't matter what education you think that you need to have, or that you are retired or too young or too old. The only thing you need is a willingness to trust God and to spend the time getting to know Him.

YOU are the next prophet of God.

I want to say it again – ***Prophecy is not predicting the future. It is knowing God so well that you can see what God is going to do next.***

God is calling you. He needs you. God is not satisfied with this world the way it is yet, so He is calling you and I to spend time with Him and to learn what He is going to do next.

Our world needs prophets. We need hope. We need direction.

Will you let God use you to show the world His path of redemption?

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.