

Where have all the prophets gone?

Psalm 27 • Luke 13:31-35

We might paraphrase Jesus' words using the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "I have a dream". Jesus had a dream. He had a dream for a world where God's authority took precedence over anything that human beings might come up with to maintain power. He had a dream of a world where the power of love overcame the love of power. We haven't seen it yet. You noticed?

I was struck last week in our Adult Study Time. As I said earlier, we're going through the Book of Amos. We made it through chapter 1. We're going to have to rush it along, because we're going to do this in the season of Lent and there's only five weeks of Lent left, but we'll get there. The verse that we read was a condemnation of the actions of a certain country in cutting the babies out of their mothers' wombs. And then I went home and I turned on the news. And the first thing on the news was about the bombing of a maternity hospital in the Ukraine. I thought, Amos...today. My, how things have not changed. Now let's remember: Amos was written close to 3000 years ago. A prophet who said, "This can't go on. We cannot continue in this fashion." Then sometime after Amos, Jesus weeps over a city, *the* city of Jerusalem. Because it destroys the prophets.

We have this unique ability to get rid of the prophetic voice. Because the prophetic voice is most often the one that tells us the thing that we do not want to hear. The prophetic voice is the one that will come to us and suggest that the love of power is inappropriate. The prophetic voice is the one that will come to us and say, "You don't need oil." The prophetic voice is the one that will come to us and say, "You must, you *must* care for the environment." The prophetic voice is the one that will come to us and say, "How are you doing with loving your neighbour? How's it going in the area of praying for those who persecute you?" I don't know about you, but I don't want to hear those voices. I don't want to pray for the ones who have persecuted me. I, frankly, have had a real hard time figuring out how to pray for Putin. But then I'm encountered by the prophetic voice that says, "I get up every morning and I pray that the light of God will shine on that man's face." And I think, oh, that's how you do it. Okay, I'll try.

I have grieved the loss of the prophets. I have grieved the loss of the prophetic voice in our own church that at the same time, I know how desperately I don't want to hear it either. I have grieved the loss of the voice that came to me from the pulpit or the pew and said, "We must do everything we can to ensure that Indigenous lives are as valuable as European lives. We must do everything we can to ensure that the next generation of children have equal opportunity regardless, regardless." Regardless of anything. Regardless of the family into which they were born. Or the family that raises them up. Or the colour of their skin. Or their non-binary choices. We must.

The voice that calls me to do more, be better, hope, hope, and hope again. The psalmist speaks not of weeping over the loss of the prophets, but of God's comfort to and support of the prophets. I love this: if my parents forsake me, the Lord will still take me up. I'm reminded of the many folk in our world who have made choices that meant their parents turned their backs. First of all, the choice to come out. But then recently, the choice may be to transform their body from one that exists to one that seems comfortable. Or right. The choice, even, to say, "Nuh, don't think Christianity is the way I want to go. I'm going to try Judaism for a while." And parents turn their backs. And the psalmist reminds us that even if parents do, God doesn't. God doesn't.

Teach me your way, O God, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. There is a reassurance that regardless of who we are or how we walk this earth or what we stand for, God is there. And the prophetic voice will always, always be there. For us, the choice is singular: we may follow, or we may not. We may follow the love of Christ. The love of humanity. Or we may choose the love of power. The choice is ours.