

Pruning Prophets and apostles

A lack of prophetic words about the next president doesn't mean God is silent; it means we're growing

Have you noticed how silent certain prophetic voices have been this election season? Consider how often in previous presidential races we've heard "Thus saith the Lord" predictions—er, *words*—on who the next U.S. president would be. And consider how many of these brash prophecies came from up-and-comers apparently trying to gain attention. That would seem cynical if not for the obvious proof verifying that, no, Pat Robertson, Rudy Giuliani, Rick Perry or [insert defeated candidate here] would not be moving into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

We all have stories of prophetic words gone amiss, though few as public as these embarrassing mishaps. When I first learned to hear from the Holy Spirit and speak on His behalf, I botched it more than a few times—and I still remember the blank stare on the faces of those for whom I "had a word" that meant absolutely nothing to them. The prophetic gift is something that's developed like a muscle. And obviously, one overzealous yet inaccurate prophetic utterance doesn't mean someone is a false prophet.

Prophecies intended for the masses, however, are another matter, and I believe much of the prophetic silence we find this election season is a result of the Lord pruning His church. He is aligning our callings and positions in the context of shaping His body, and that involves correcting and trimming any overgrown, "wild" areas.

As the church has re-engaged with the fivefold ministry model in recent decades, there's been a noticeable pattern during each season of emphasis: The church will grow in understanding and valuing the office of the teacher, for example, only to

see a rise of false teachers, heretical teachings, and scandals and moral failures among teachers. This has certainly been the case within the apostolic/prophetic movement, which we feature prominently in this issue as part of our ongoing focus on the “12 Communities of *Charisma*.” In fact, not since the church’s early days have we had more apostles and prophets gone wild.

I love the apostolic/prophetic community, have been part of it for years and believe in the values it represents. But I’ve also watched friends within this movement become so enamored with their onstage prophetic anointing that it’s become a persona unto itself. Under this “anointing,” they’ve publicly declared that they were no longer merely prophets (as if that were a lower class) but should also be called apostles, commissioned by God. Some added insult to injury by glorifying supernatural manifestations over sound biblical doctrine, while embracing strange spiritual expressions under the blanket theology that “God moves in mysterious ways.”

Indeed, He does—including through odd prophetic acts (ask Hosea). But the craziness so easily embraced by this part of the body is disconcerting enough that some of its biggest leaders have told me that they now avoid referring to anyone as a prophet or apostle.

That’s tragic. It’s also a sign—as is this election season’s lack of prophetic crapshoot—of the Lord shaping and pruning His body.

Growth inherently involves awkward, embarrassing stages, and the apostolic/prophetic movement certainly has had its share of “wild,” out-of-control branches that needed pruning. That doesn’t mean those who have been burned by a reckless prophet or apostle—which is virtually everyone—should give up on these offices. It means we need to take a step back, realize how we’ve over-emphasized certain parts of the body of Christ and recognize what Jesus, the head of this body, is doing today.

Though we've heard fewer "predictions" during these elections, our nation has already had its fill of prophetic warnings. Whether God uses prophets to foretell a candidate's win or sends apostles to reveal His power, His plan for the church hasn't changed. He's given His body gifts and called us to certain offices and positions within that body—all with the goal of being unified under Jesus' headship. Those of us in the apostolic/prophetic community would do well to remember our part.

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