

7 Reasons Prophetic Voices Are Silent

As a pastor I have been involved in political, economic and social issues in order to be holistic in ministering to the needs of our community, as well as functioning prophetically to influential elected officials. In this context, I have observed how many leaders also involved in holistic ministry have “behaved themselves” in regards to speaking out prophetically on major biblical issues. My opinion is that we are all called to be prophetic—especially preachers of the gospel (1 Peter 4:11).

For example, during the past decade I have been a major proponent of preserving biblical marriage and have worked against legalizing alternate forms of marriage such as same-sex marriage. As I have helped lead the charge, some of my good friends have intentionally remained silent for a variety of reasons.

The following are some of the reasons pastors have muzzled their prophetic voice:

1. Some feel pressured to side with a political leader because of their ethnicity

Thus, if they speak against certain local or national candidates they will get a lot of heat from their congregations and ministry peers for not standing with a brother or sister.

One pastor indicated that if he spoke what he really believed regarding this particular presidential election that he would have lost many of the people in his church because they would view him as a betrayer of his own people!

2. Some pastors won't vote against party affiliation

Many pastors in urban contexts will vote straight down the party line because, even if they agree more with the moral values of the other political party, they feel they will betray their own people and the party that has stood with them through the years, especially if they perceive their party has been more sensitive to the needs of their communities and ethnic people.

3. Some pastors will muzzle their prophetic voice for the sake of political access and influence

Many prominent pastors will tow the party line and muzzle their voice to keep political access and to make politicians in their district happy! For example, I have seen rock-solid Bible-believing pastors endorse pro-choice, pro same-sex marriage candidates from their pulpits, which shocked many people in their cities and churches!.

When we get to the bottom of it, we realize some clergy have a lot of political access, power and influence with a particular party and, in spite of their biblical beliefs, they will play the political game and endorse candidates even if they undermine some of the values they hold dearest!

4. Pastors muzzle their voice because of government funding they receive

One pastor I know told a mutual friend that he couldn't fight same-sex marriage in our city because, if he did, he would lose most of the funding for his community programs! This is unfortunately a bittersweet reality: On the one hand we should partner with elected officials to ameliorate the challenging issues of our cities, but on the other hand if our activism or what we preach goes against the ideology of the elected officials and/or the political party that is funding us, then there is a good chance our funding will be reduced or taken away all together! A pastor in that situation will inevitably ask themselves the question: What is more important, providing

a needed service for my community or opening my mouth prophetically for an issue that may or may not directly affect everyone in my congregation? (Of course, I would say the redefinition of marriage has ramifications that will negatively affect all people in our nation!)

5. Some pastors feel more comfortable dealing with justice issues rather than moral issues

Evangelicals have a negative stigma attached to them by the mainstream culture via the media, academia and the cultural elite regarding accusations of being homophobic, pandering to one political party, being uneducated fundamentalists, and/or being racists. Consequently, many younger evangelicals are trying to shake that negative connotation and are just focusing on serving the poor, racial reconciliation and financial empowerment related to community development projects. Even though they agree with conservatives regarding their opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage and the like, they have separated justice issues and moral issues. Some will even vote for liberal candidates who are more willing to fund programs that aid the poor.

In my humble opinion, it is a mistake to separate justice from morality because I believe terminating the lives of the unborn is the biggest justice issue of them all. As bad as racism and unemployment are, abortion is worse because it robs individuals of entering into this world to make a difference. Also, what is a bigger justice issue than protecting the most vulnerable of our society like the innocent human baby inside the womb. To further bring the point home: Was the murder of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis during World War II a moral issue only, or was it also a justice issue? If the Holocaust was both a justice issue and a moral issue (as I think it was) then how is taking the life of the innocent unborn not a justice issue?

6. Most pastors don't want to lose their tax-exempt status

Since the Johnson Amendment in 1954, which threatens the revocation of 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, pastors have been afraid to speak prophetically regarding faith as it relates to politics. This has also been exacerbated by the fact that many in the media and culture have erroneously taught during the past several decades that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution teaches the separation of church and state. This is not in the Constitution; the First Amendment merely refers to Congress not being allowed to establish one Christian denomination with national ascendancy over all other denominations.

One of the negative results from the Johnson Amendment has been to push pastors and their preaching themes even further towards things spiritual, subjective and/or otherworldly, resulting in us staying away from our primary call, which is to live out our spirituality as stewards influencing all areas of culture as salt and light (Genesis 1:28; Matthew 5:13-16).

Besides, the Johnson Amendment violates the First Amendment. If the clergy of the original 13 colonies didn't preach political sermons and mix politics with their faith they would have never had the unity or the impetus to break away from Great Britain. It was the preaching of the American clergy and the First Great Awakening that united the colonies together under one nation.

7. Many pastors limit their biblical beliefs and preaching to things spiritual and avoid political and justice issues

Because of a faulty individualistic theology, many clergy would never think of being prophetically inspired to preach on current events as they relate to political and social issues. Unfortunately, many people in church, including pastors, believe the Bible is a book that only relates to individual piety and spirituality, thus making it irrelevant regarding politics, economics and issues of justice and righteousness. The results have been catastrophic as the church's prophetic

voice to the nations has been buried beneath an individualistic, self-focused heap resulting in the church abandoning our culture to secular humanists.

In closing, it is high time for the pastors of this nation to hear from heaven and preach prophetic messages with power from on high that will shake both heaven and earth with a passion for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done in our land as it is in heaven.

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