

When the captives can speak for themselves (Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28)

God invites us to live out an authentic prophetic ministry truly guided by God.

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The readings for this week cover a series of topics we cannot afford to ignore. In Deuteronomy, we see the announcement that a prophet will rise up who will speak God's words. In the Gospel reading, we see such a prophet in action—and not just a prophet but the Messiah, speaking God's words directly to evil forces in action and bringing deliverance to the victim of their torment. The psalm and the letter to the Corinthians offer a powerful lesson regarding wisdom and knowledge: both passages challenge prevailing notions of what a wise or knowledgeable person should look like.

There is no doubt that prophetic voices are needed in our world, but we need prophetic voices willing to pay the cost of prophetic ministry. We need prophetic voices who truly speak God's words not only with their mouths, but with their actions.

And we need prophetic voices who reflect consistent lives in whatever arena or space they are in. The church has the chance to offer our society a different way of living—a contrast with the latest scandals of people in public service who were supposed to serve but instead lived a double life contrary to the high moral standards of the office they held.

Prophetic voices truly guided by God will reflect the kind of wisdom and knowledge that the psalmist and Paul talk about. A wise prophetic voice will always reflect a healthy fear of the Lord—not just a political agenda. The fear of the Lord is what distinguishes transformative social activism from mere political activism that responds to specific group and personal interests. A wise prophetic voice will use her knowledge to empower and lift up marginalized voices, rather than perpetuating oppression by trying to be the “voice of the voiceless.”

God invites us to live out an authentic prophetic ministry truly guided by God, one that reflects compassion and care as well as a humble posture so that the priority is always the neglected, forgotten other. God invites us to practice a wise prophetic voice that seeks the deliverance of the people by creating spaces where the captives can finally speak for themselves.

At the end of the day, I don't think what Jesus wants is a handful of heroic prophetic voices. He wants humanity as a whole to be able to resist evil and overcome the power of sin.