

## **Being a Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice**

### **Introduction**

- Fallen World – Many Opportunities
- Reality TV “What Would You Do?” Responding to various scenarios on moral dilemmas.
- Best Model: the Prophets of the Sovereign Lord (“it’s what they do”)  
Look at Ezekiel’s call to better understand what being a mouthpiece for truth and justice entails;  
If we are tempted to romanticize being such a mouthpiece, this will provide a reality check as prophets were most likely to be ignored, persecuted, and killed.

Context for our Passage (Ezekiel 2:1 – 3:15):

- Historical: Southern kingdom:
  - exile timing – 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of captivity (first wave brought Daniel to Babylon);
  - Babylon’s practice of bringing the best captives to serve in the capital, unlike Assyria
- Literary: Ezekiel’s vision in Babylon
  - Four creatures; wheels within wheels with eyes; a Theophany
  - Clear and surprising message: God is present in Babylon!

**As we look at this passage from the perspective of what it means to be a mouthpiece for truth and justice, We see that (Thesis:) God empowers feeble “sons of man” to be His mouthpieces...**

- Let’s look at Five (5) Conditions that are required for being a mouthpiece

### **1<sup>st</sup> Condition: Utter Dependence on God**

- Read 2:1-2
- God calls
  - unsought;
  - “son of man” emphasizes the feebleness of Ezekiel compared to God;
  - Spirit empowers; God speaks – we need both His Spirit and His Word
- Example – it is so easy for us to act in own strength  
This was certainly where I started as I found myself thinking more about seeking your praise and approval by giving a great sermon that would impress you. Thankfully, Tuesday night as I was going to bed, I was reminded of this passage and resulted in a repentant prayer: we can do nothing on own and I needed the Lord to be at work for His purposes and glory – not mine.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Condition: Must Speak God’s Message**

- Read 2:3-7
- What was central to his message? The Sovereignty of God
- Ezekiel is given a preview that his message is likely to be resisted:
  - Called Sons of Israel (the one who strives with God);
  - Called “nation” *goyim* – a term only used for the Gentile nations!  
In essence, Israel had out gentiled the Gentiles by worshiping idols from all the nations
- Objective: they would know that a prophet had been in midst. How?
  - not by the style or behavior, though Ezekiel acted out the message in a unique fashion;
  - instead, it would be known by the fillment predicted disasters (proof of a prophet 100% true)
- Notice also the severity of the conflict we would face:
  - thorns, thistles, scorpions
  - His response was given as a charge: be not afraid; speak my words
- Example: have you ever confronted someone who is stubborn and unwilling to listen?  
As a result of my boss wrongly castigating an Orientation Leader, I confronted him. It did not turn out well... Until he retired, he was angry at me, yet it was important to address the injustice.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Condition: Must Internalize Message First**

- Read 2:8-3:3
- In Contrast to the Sons of Israel, Ezekiel *listens*

- Internalizing the Message is illustrate in the call to eat the Scroll
  - Notice, it was written on both sides (lament, warning, woe) – so great is the wrath
  - Eat conveys internalizing c.f. Jn.15:7-10; also reminiscent of Jesus speaking to the churches of Ephesus and Sardis in the book of Revelation – who had *not* fully internalized the message.
  - Sweetness as honey; how could that be? Though a message of woe, God’s word is edifying and helped Ezekiel desire more greatly that God would be glorified, enabling him to better have God’s perspective on the captivity.
- Example: What Difficult Messages are important for us to internalize?
  - A most significant one is the message that Jesus is the only way to God. I remember a discussion with Paul who said he could not follow a God that would send people to hell. I responded noting that that is the God of the Bible – Jesus speaks more of hell than of love.
  - What is sweet about that? We have to keep in mind that, for our sake, Jesus became object of God’s wrath. All of the judgments on the scroll given to Ezekiel and much more were poured out on Jesus at the cross instead of on us.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Condition: Must Rely on God’s Strength & Purposes**

- Read 3:4-11
- This introduces a corrective to the series title:  
Is God more concerned about Fruitfulness or Faithfulness?
  - if fruitfulness, then Ezekiel was a failure: they were not going to listen (Gentiles would have!)
  - We must keep in mind that God is glorified in other ways other than fruitfulness (e.g. in Egypt, God is glorified by His power being displayed in the plagues – there was no repentance.
- Have you ever expected fruit and have been disappointed – did you miss God’s purposes?
- Example: When our son, Billy, died 19 years ago, we expected fruit in the form of many coming to faith in Christ. The church was filled and the service broadcast by local cable TV and the gospel message was clearly proclaimed. However, we did not see students or co-workers coming to faith. Upon reflection, what might God’s purposes have been?
  - Directing Becca into nursing and missions;
  - Janis was directed to begin a Stephen’s Ministry to reach out to those hurting;
  - I understood much better the wisdom of God in providing salvation by faith *alone*.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Condition: Must Be Present on the Frontline**

- Read 3:12-15
- God is present – note the activity of the Spirit AND earlier vision elements;
- Location to which he was sent was where the exiles lived
- Bitterness and Anger; 7 days (mourning) overwhelmed
  - Now we see more similarity with Revelation scroll: sweet to bitter;
  - Anger at sin and its consequences;
  - Personal impact: he was looking forward to serving as a Priest (mediator) in God’s temple; now he would be a mouthpiece for truth and justice proclaiming judgment.
- Example: Diana and my discussion when we were in Haiti about our frontline working at a university:
  - Spirit of this age in conflict with Sovereign God;
  - I serve on an inclusive culture committee and am reminded of the One vs. Two conflict. Namely some say everything is okay because there is no difference (Romans 1); We say that we have all fallen short of God’s standards and are in need of the gospel of grace.
  - Both believe it is important to be inclusive, but the Christian perspective is rooting in God’s faith community being inclusive of all tribes, tongues, and nations and we are called to proclaim the gospel to the whole world and to love others as God has loved us.

#### **Conclusion and Summary: Consider your frontlines and remember:**

- We have a CALLING: to live as salt and light;
- God is PRESENT with us: Indwelling Spirit + Word;

- The Son of Man was also a son of man
  - son of man focuses on humanity. Jesus did something most un-divine: he died.
  - Son of Man: God incarnate, Jesus now reigns as Prophet, Priest, and King;
  - Ezekiel is only a shadow (type) of the One on whom we are to fix our eyes: Jesus, our Lord, Savior;
- The Difficulty in being a mouthpiece for truth and justice is GREAT:
  - Ezekiel was sent to those who would not listen;
  - We are sent to those dead in sin (Gentiles)
- It is not enough to just speak truth; we are to speak the truth in love
- IT IS ONLY POSSIBLE TO BE A MOUTHPIECE OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE IF WE ARE HUMBLY DEPENDENT ON THE LIVING GOD!