

18th December 2020

Prophets

**“Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder;
Angels behold him on his throne;
Worthy our Saviour of all their praises;
Happy forever are his own.”**

Mary Macdonald, Leanabh an àigh (Child in a Manger)

Prophets figure highly in the Advent story, and so they should, for the “foretelling” of the prophets is integral to our preparations for Christmas. One of the great pieces of prophetic writing comes to us from the prophet Isaiah. In chapter 11, the prophet writes:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Of course, this anticipates the birth of Jesus, “God with us”. But, to be honest, I’m more affected by – and interested in – what Isaiah prophesies about the kind of world he expects to see because of God’s presence.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

As we anticipate Christ’s birth – “and a little child shall lead them” – let’s not assume we can leave such a world to be created simply by divine intervention. We have a job to do, to create such an environment of justice and peace, equity and fairness, cooperation and acceptance. So, let’s not confine prophecies to a bygone age, a season of the year or, indeed, to theological explorations. Where are the prophets of now? What are they saying to us? And how can we respond to their prophetic message today?

A prayer for today

*Let the prophets speak! Let their voices be heard!
Let all the people respond! And let lives be changed! Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon
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