

Worship Prophetic Style

Prophets and Jesus: Ethics Matters

Throughout the OT and continued in the ministry of Jesus, God has a preferential option for the poor, powerless, widows, orphans and immigrants. This was the list in Biblical times of people that had no access to power or privilege, and were always vulnerable to abuse, starvation, or death. We could add other groups to the list today, such as BIPOC (Blacks, Indigenous, People of Color). God always measured the nation using these groups as the markers.

The prophets' strongest critiques were aimed at those elites who had the money and the power, but refused to use it for the good of the least and lowest.

And it came home to roost in their misguided attempt to use worship as a smokescreen to blind God's eyes and deafen God's ears to the plight of the poor, powerless, widows, orphans and immigrants.

The prophets would have none of it, and called them on it. Jesus' cleansing of the temple is in line with this trajectory. It is not a new thing or a new idea. Often we think that what Jesus was critiquing was the cheating of worshippers who had to buy a sacrificial animal for the temple. The text doesn't say that. Rather it says that they had turned the temple into a robbers den! Robbers use the den as a safe place to hide out after they've robbed a bank. The temple according to Jesus, was their hideout, after ripping off the people all week long. They run to the temple/robbers' den, thinking that they are safe, and God won't notice what their lives are like. Think again says Jesus, as he drives them out.

The following passages all in one way or another connect to these themes. Look them up. Jot down what you notice. Then take some time looking long and hard at our own country and how we've treated those that God uses as a marker to discern if we are a faithful nation. Sobering exercise!

- Genesis 12:1-3
- Exodus 2:23-25
- Exodus 3:7
- Exodus 22:21-24
- Exodus 23: 6-9
- Leviticus 19:18, 33-34
- Deuteronomy 10:17-19
- Deuteronomy 24:14-21
- 1 Samuel 15:22-23
- Psalm 146
- Proverbs 14:31
- Proverbs 15:8
- Proverbs 21:3
- Isaiah 1:11-17; 23
- Isaiah 3:13-15
- Isaiah 10:1-2

- Isaiah 56:1-2
- Isaiah 58:1-14
- Isaiah 59:14-15
- Jeremiah 7:1-26
- Hosea 6:4-6
- Hosea 8:11-13
- Amos 5:21-25
- Micah 6:6-8
- Zechariah 7:9-10
- Zechariah 14:21
- Malachi 3:5
- Matthew 21:12f
- Matthew 25:31-46, especially 35 and 43
- Mark 11:11f
- Luke 4: 16-30
- Luke 19:45f
- John 2:14f
- Ephesians 4:28-5:2
- 1 John 3:16-18
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Page 228 of the baptismal service in ELW

Page 236 of the Affirmation of baptism service in the ELW