

A NOT FOR PROPHET ORGANIZATION
[this is written in oral form]

Have you ever been in the situation when you think you're saying something good or positive, and then ... "wham" ... someone reacts negatively with harsh words? ??

I know I have, and it's not a pleasant surprise when that happens.
And usually, a polite defence is brushed aside.

It's uncomfortable, even painful, so we generally learn to screen our words or bite our tongues when we are around such a person, and just smile and talk about the weather.

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Some people are "touchy" about certain issues.  
I find this to be frustrating because I enjoy talking about theology and politics.

It sure seems people are really polarized these days.  
Opinions and loyalties can be quite entrenched.  
Informative discussions, without emotional intensity, with someone with a different position are rare.

So, a result of this isolation is the formation of like minded choirs where rants are sung in harmony, ... such as Facebook.

It seems we value calm, dial tone emotions more than the exchanging of opinions and ideas.  
Yet, how do engage? How do we test our views?  
How do we learn from the "other side"?  
Moreover, what about challenging those who are either ignorant or possess selfish and destructive ideology? And, when we are ignorant or have myopic views, how are we questioned?

Is perceived harmony-- a calm, cordial interaction the prime virtue?  
Should we all get along, whether we like it or NOT? ???

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Jesus was Not afraid to rock the boat. He wasn't motivated to get along with everybody. I don't think he was easily intimidated, either.

Occasionally, Jesus said or did things to provoke his adversaries.
He was a bit of a gadfly, but not insolent.

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Certain situations may necessitate risky provocation. Such as:  
If hornets build a nest in your house, it's best to move the nest and endure a brief attack, than to learn to live subjugated in fear.  
This is especially true if your responsible for children in the house.

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The episode in Luke begins with Jesus teaching on the Sabbath in a synagogue.

At this stage of his ministry, he wasn't doing that anymore,.... because the leaders would no longer welcome him to speak there.
So, by being there, Jesus was pushing their buttons, a bit.

Nevertheless, Jesus was merely teaching when he couldn't help but notice a crippled woman enter. She was all bent over, and had been that way for 18 years.
The passage states that a spirit from Satan caused her condition.

Demons do have a way of twisting us up and casting our vision down.

Still, citing Satan is a poetic way of saying that such ailments and suffering are NOT from God. God moves to bring healing and wholeness to those who are suffering, broken and weak. God is Not the source of such suffering.

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Jesus took the initiative to talk to her, to touch her and to heal her from her affliction. And, upon receiving Jesus' touch she stood up straight and praised God.

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To the establishment / to the religious leaders, Jesus' supernatural demonstration only served to raise Jesus' influence and bring theirs down. They perceived Jesus as a threat to their power and position.

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So, the leader of the synagogue, with his colleagues behind him, stood up and verbally assaulted Jesus with condemnation for healing the woman on the Sabbath.

The leader did NOT politely question Jesus on his motives.

He did not calmly comment on the unorthodox discretion.

Moreover, the leader didn't even address Jesus.

He ignored Jesus as he passed judgment on him. He was ranting to the crowd--trying to win them over.

*Ranting to the crowd,..reminds me of designated suit when playing cards.*

Imagine Jesus' surprise.

Imagine how the woman felt for being the centre of such a ruckus.

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Jesus could have walked away to the shadows in silence.

He could have been a good Mennonite and said, "*Excuse me, there is contention. Let's form a committee to look into this.*

Perhaps, we could have a discernment process..... or simply 'Agree to disagree.' We need not upset anyone."

Jesus was not passive, Instead he lashed out at all his adversaries.

"You hypocrites" is plural.

Jesus exposed their flawed reasoning / their unjust laws and mean nature.

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The Sabbath rules allowed them to care for their animals / their personal property,..... but forbid helping the weak and suffering.

They not only verbally attacked Jesus, but they also were unrighteous and unjust with "their" pious protection of the Sabbath.

The rules favoured their status and life style / their station in society.  
Their rules were unjust to the crippled woman, ..... and.... they were trying to persuade the crowd to join them in their perverse theology in order to retain "their" privileges.

Jesus was NOT concerned about converting them to his way or establishing a calm rapport. Jesus intended to lay them low and to negate their poison, even if it meant shaming them and pushing them farther to their pole / away from God. Shocking?

No. They owned their our response. The victim needed defending!  
Maybe in time they'd see the light. ????

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Legalism / obedience to the rules.....works to make us feel pious, faithful, safe and righteous, YET the rules must be just / fair for all and not merely to reinforce the status quo / those in power.

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Nevertheless, proper Sabbath observance was a minor aspect of this text.  
The message is much more about standing up and speaking out for justice and true righteousness,.....even if it increases polarization and pushes some away.

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What's the big deal?
Exposing abusive, unjust rules, written or unwritten, matters a lot!
Because when privilege society twists the rules to meet their needs, then Black men get pulled over and shot;
a young Cree man asking for help with a flat tire gets shot,
and Palestinians get abused and shot.

The Lesson Jesus demonstrated is very important; it saves lives.

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The Jeremiah passage presents Jeremiah's call to be a prophet.
Jeremiah was afraid to be a prophet. He didn't think he was qualified, and he didn't want the burden; he was afraid to speak out.

Yet, he felt God's touch upon his life, and heeded God's call to proclaim messages that destroy and overthrow, and that build up and plant seeds. Messages were from God.
The prophet pulls down **and**lifts up.

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Jesus was part prophet. In this one engagement, Jesus lifted up a hurting woman and pulled down his adversaries.

The church is the body of Christ. We of many parts form one body--Christ in the world.  
Yet,..... I think, too often, we are missing a part. We are incomplete.

In our pursuit to get along and to be quiet and non-threatening,..... we have pretty much silenced the roll of prophet.

Yes, we live in a polarized world, but it was polarized 2,000 years ago, and that didn't dissuade Jesus.

Our primary purpose is not to keep the calm and live in a make-believe harmony.  
Do we really want to live with hornets, and what about the weak and the children.  
Who will stand up for them?

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Silence would have empowered the synagogue leader.
Silence in the face of injustice, lies and abuse.....empowers the bullies and the tyrants, and silence invites more injustice, lies and abuse.

This is true in one to one relationships.
It's true on the schoolyard..... or at work, and it's true at the national and international level.

Nobody should become a helpless victim when assaulted, and all victims need bold advocates.

As Jesus did, we need to defend ourselves and our beliefs, if they are just / if they reflect Jesus,... ..and more importantly, we Must defend the weak, the powerless and suffering.

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To be sure, violence is Never a good defence, and neither is silence.

Silence in the face of injustice, lies and abuse.....empowers the bullies and the tyrants, and silence invites more injustice, lies and abuse.

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There are lots of issues / injustices that need to be exposed and confronted, including the perilous rate of global warming.

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We are good at helping people. We are faithful in service / in lifting up the weak and suffering,..... as we must be.

We do try to live out Jesus' compassionate and healing nature.

Yet, it is bizarre to think that we can pick and chose what parts of Christ we want to be..... and ignore the rest,..... then claim that we are a church.

If we merely go around helping people and having great potlucks, then we are basically a noble not-for-profit organization.

Because,..... **we are NOT for prophet..... spelled p r o p h e t.**

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God called out Jeremiah to be a prophet, and we are called to be a church -- the body of Christ in the world today.

Therefore, some of the parts will excel at healing,..... others at teaching..... some at fixing things, some at comforting..... and some will be as prophets.

We need all parts!!! The church must also be a prophet.

The world needs to us to speak out.....with the power of God.

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And,.....here is the painful rub in the lesson:

There is lots of wiggle room in being compassionate, gracious and caring, and we have precedent for teaching and instructing.

Yet, a prophet blazes a new trail,.....and words linger.... They get passed around and can be used against the prophet.

Plus, how do we know when to "bring down" and "when to lift up" with our words?

How do we know what to say and when to say....the right words?

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Today's passages teach us:

A FOR Prophet Church is a church that actively listens to God,... and then follows God's lead....risking everything, including the church itself.

That is truly the way of Christ.