

***A prophetic Church***  
**Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC**  
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There are thousands of local churches in the country. Days come and days go and the society we live in continues its march, its process, its history. Churches do not make a difference. If we start from the perspective of the poor and the victim, at the macro level, society continues its social violence, injustice and racial and gender discrimination. It seems that churches have assimilated the system of life without God. It seems that churches are part of the system of social exclusion.

Therefore, in regard to ourselves we must ask the following questions, what kind of church are we? Are we one of the churches that reproduce the system of injustice and social exclusion? To answer these questions we must consider the social practice that we do, our awareness of the nature and mission of the church that we have and what our dream or vision of the future is. But if these aspects are important to answer our questions, there is another that is determinative of practice, awareness and hope. I mean the question, what is the foundation of the church? Surely you will tell me, Jesus Christ is our foundation, and surely he is. However, a lot of churches say the same. So we should be more specific, what Jesus Christ? For the churches tend to create Jesus Christs, depending on the school or theological movement to which they adhere. Depending on the method of biblical interpretation they use. Depending on the political, economic and cultural interests they have. Otherwise, how to explain the differences in social practices that churches have? Some churches deny the violent reality of society and history with their indifference. Their emphasis is the individual salvation for life after death. Other churches are active to assert arrogance and supremacy of one race, so justify racial discrimination and violation of human rights of other races or minorities. For them to be from the South or third or fourth world, it is synonymous with inferiority, ignorance, cheap labor. Other churches have fallen into the idolatry of money, because they equate salvation with material well-being. There are also churches that more than talking about Jesus Christ, their center is their own denomination or religious institution. To connect to God we must first pass through loyalty to the church or denomination. Internally, all churches worship, teach and collect offering. But all this is ultimately marked with the type of foundation they have. Foundation that is tailored to the interests they have.

Where are we? What is our foundation? Which Jesus Christ do we follow? It would be good to be humble, honest and sincere. It would be good to say, "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief." It would be good to respond to the insistent question of Jesus, "Do you love me?" with "You know I love you. You know all things." For in the evangelical sense of spiritual honesty, we are useful and useless, we are faithful and infidels, we are believers and unbelievers. We are relative not absolute, we are temporary not eternal, we are interdependent not independent. We are individuals in a particular time and space. We can well say that we are church of the historical path, and church of the Path capitalized. Our nature and mission is determined by the historical context in which we live and the foundation of Jesus Christ and his project to the kingdom of God. If we follow Jesus of Nazareth and his project, this relationship shapes our consciousness, determines our practice and affirms our hope in the present.

Christology of the New Testament has several names for Jesus. The most famous are: Lord, savior, prophet, priest and king. Some names have general character, as Lord and Savior and others are related to more specific functions, as Priest for his role as intercessor, king for his scatological domain. Naturally Jesus was one and his conscience was one, and his practice was one. Depending on the circumstances he proclaimed, taught and served. In general, for the society colonized by the Roman Empire in which he lived, he had a project to offer. This project was, as you know, the kingdom of God. A project of society in which God is the ruler, not like human rulers. It was an alternative project. Therefore his statement was a denial of the society colonized by the empire. The preaching, teaching and practice of Jesus went against the current of thought, against the imperialist state,

against religion married to the empire, against those who benefited from colonization, wars and slavery. Jesus and his lifestyle was not a gold coin to be liked by everyone. And in his actions there was love, compassion, intercession, forgiveness, complaint, judgment and organization.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth and said:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom  
for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4: 18-19

Thus he declared that his message and ministry were aimed at the poor and the oppressed, and to all human needs.

On the road to Emmaus when Jesus asked two of his disciples who did not recognize him, what things had happened in Jerusalem, they said, "Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people;" Luke 24: 19b

I cite these texts to remember how Jesus was seen by the early Christian communities. For them, Jesus was a prophet and more. And as prophet was the maximum mediation between God and men. So if we are believers, if we are Christian followers of Jesus, if Jesus Christ is our foundation, then we must imitate him, follow him and obey him. We must assume, strengthen and live the prophetic ministry, to be a prophetic church. This means personally live the prophetic ethic of fairness and integrity; at the congregation level it means to be a community of faith, in which we share the teachings of Jesus Christ, in which we share the interests of life, in which we study the situation of the society, and all this to be mediation of Jesus Christ in the world around us.

Being a prophetic church is to be a community of love to the neighbor, compassion for the marginalized, oppressed and victims of the system of exclusion in which we live. Being a prophetic church is to tell the truth of Jesus Christ to those who govern. Being a prophetic church is to present an alternative society, as God wants it. So a prophetic church is critical of social diseases and disorders. Criticism of poverty, criticism of civil violence and state violence, criticism of idolatry, false gods, the god of money. A prophetic church weeps and grieves for the situation of inhumanity. A prophetic church is purposeful, earthly and contextualized. It does not preach to the graves or clouds. It does not have economic or political commitments that adulterate the counsel of God. It is not self-centered, but in the children of the Lord. It rejoices with those who achieve liberation, suffers with the pain of the victims.

It lives in the present seeing the future of God, it lives the future of God seeing the present. The prophetic church is a servant church, it is a Samaritan church, it is a church that knows how to smile.

For us, it is clear that Jesus Christ is Lord, Savior and prophet; and that the Church is the presence of Jesus Christ in the family and society. It is a transforming presence, which brings peace and animation. That as Jesus was the Word of God to the world, we as Church must be word, presence, communication, practice of Jesus Christ in the world. That is our calling that is our vocation and reason for being. As a Church we are mediating between Jesus Christ and Washington, DC, between Jesus Christ and society. We are not empty-handed. We have an intelligence and a consciousness; we have the canonical books, the Gospels and the faith of the followers of Jesus of the first communities. In them there is the content and meaning of the kingdom of God in its historical context. We have an economic, political and social reality in which we live. We have the Holy Spirit who gives us life and the necessary strength. What are we missing? To give the second and the third step, walk and walk.

And walk means to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the poor, the marginalized, the excluded and the "wretched of the earth". The "small" of the Lord are our neighbor, they are our goal, and they are the subject of the kingdom of God. We have hope and a dream. Hope is performed with the prophetic ministry. We are called to be a charismatic church, led by the Spirit and a prophetic church, mediation of Jesus Christ in the world, transforming presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

With a drop and another drop the oceans formed. The kingdom of God is like the little seed that then grows and grows. We are a community of believers in downtown Washington, DC. We are a small church, called to walk, and called to be a prophetic church.

Let us love between us

Let us love the small of the Lord

Let's get organized for the prophetic work

Let's have an alternative proposal of man and woman. The new woman and the new man in Jesus Christ.

Let's have an alternative proposal of society. The society where we are people, brothers and sisters, with relationships of justice and respect. Society with freedom to serve, work, share and respect nature.

As prophetic church, let's help strengthen the family

As prophetic church, let's save children from indifference, ignorance and disease.

As prophetic church, let's identify with those who suffer discrimination based on their religion, race, gender, sexual orientation.

As prophetic church, let's affirm that water is a universal right. That peace is a human right.

With Jesus as a prophet we proclaim that violence, war, the arms industry and economic power will not prevail. That from the past, at present and in the future, only the truth of life in dignity, freedom to respect the rights of others, the vocation of service and love have a historical and transcendent value.

Let us walk then, with the smile of the child

With the rainbow of hope

With the planted fields of the farmer

With freedom of the butterfly

Let's walk with an open heart

Let's walk with courage

Let us walk together as mediation between Jesus Christ and our world.

Let's walk as a prophetic Church.