

New Year, New Words

Delivered: December 31, 2023

Scriptures: [Mark 4:13-20](#), [Mark 7:13](#), [Acts 13:1-3](#)

Intro

The New Year is always a great time to take inventory. This is the time of year when we look back at the past 12 months to see what worked and what didn't, when personal goals are diligently written out...

And the New Year is that special time of year when every Facebook prophet and YouTube minister has the word of the Lord for what God is going to do this year.

Because of this onslaught of "prophetic" activity that seems to hit the church this time of year, I feel a shepherding responsibility to make sure that we as a church family approach prophecy and the word of the Lord with maturity. He gives us gifts for the equipping of the saints, for the growing up into maturity...that we should no longer be infants, tossed around with every "new teaching" ([Ephesians 4.14](#)).

So I want to make two main points tonight:

- God's design for the prophetic word is within the local church, and
- our responsibility in stewarding the word that He speaks to us

This is not an extensive or deep teaching on prophecy by any means.

God's Design for the Prophetic Word Within the Local Church

I believe that the teaching of Scripture is that the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the Body are intended to be birthed within a local church family...prophecy being no exception. I believe the prophetic word of the Lord is most at home within the safety, the accountability, and the stewardship of the covenant church family.

What do I mean by that? Look at [Acts 13.1-3](#),

1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and

teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the

3 work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

So we see in the context of a local church family, where there are shepherds and teachers, a church family doing life together, devoting themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer ([Acts 2.42](#)), brothers and sisters who are accountable to one another, discipling one another and actually have relationship with one another...in THAT context they are ministering to the Lord (priestly language) and the prophetic word of the Lord comes to them.

Because the word comes to this healthy environment, it can be tested, received, and implemented with accountability. If 6 months go by and Paul is still hanging out in Antioch wondering whether that was really God speaking or not, he has a church family there who can tell him to get in line with the word of the Lord over his life. The church of Antioch becomes the launch pad for Paul’s missionary journeys. His church family is who he is sent from and who he returns to. His church family was there when God sent him apart. So if Paul ever finds himself penniless, discouraged, ready to quit, and second guessing his calling there is a church family there to remind him what God said when they were ministering to the Lord together.

God has designed the local church family to be the incubator for His word.

This is why I have such a problem with Instagram prophets...they're social media influencers who have about as much relational connection to their followers as Kylie Jenner has with hers. That's not the kingdom. Can God use it, sure...He can speak through a donkey if He needs to get a message across. But that doesn't mean listening to donkeys is now the standard for hearing the word of the Lord. Instead of drinking from the trough, that anyone with an Instagram account can access, how about we take our seat on the sea of glass with the brothers and sisters He has joined us to in covenant

relationship and let the voice of God shake us with a word that sets our trajectory for the next 12 months.

The church family gathered together, ministering to Him as a family of priests, is the seed bed that the prophetic word of the Lord is looking to plant itself in. Within that family, God places the necessary requirements to handle something as precious as His living word; things like love and relationship and accountability and maturity and humility.

My prayer for 3 years has been that God would take the prophet off of the platform and seat him at the table in covenant family relationship. It's part of a larger prayer that I pray; God tear down the platforms and build tables out of them.

And for our church family, my prayer is that God would release the prophetic voice in our midst, that the word of the Lord would be so active among us that we wouldn't need to go to the prophetic conference to hear what God is saying...that He would raise up genuine prophets within the context of family who have no ambitions to parlay their gifting into personal ministry brands.

I pray the same thing for gifted worshippers to come from this house...anointed worshippers who reject the magnetic pull of the stage...fiery evangelists who refuse to leave their community when revival breaks out somewhere else...intercessors who weep night after night because they know God has promises for this church family that have not yet come to pass...anointed entrepreneurs who could make more money in a larger market but know there are still jobless and homeless people in this community. **1 Corinthians 12.11** says,

“The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to each one as He wills.”

I believe that those gifts are best stewarded within the local church family. The prophetic voice is no different.

So plug into the church family. Don't just graze on the fringes when it's convenient to attend...commit to be part of the body, and expect the Holy Spirit to give gifts to His church.

Our Responsibility to Steward The Word

His word is the most powerful thing known to creation.. God simply spoke and the world came into being. **Hebrews 1.3** says that He upholds all things by the power of His word. **Hebrews 4.12** says that His word is alive and active, it pierces to the division of soul and spirit, it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

But the absolute scandal of our gospel is this: the effectiveness of God's word is somehow connected to the heart of the person that word is spoken to. What do I mean by that? Two things: the word has within itself all it needs to accomplish its purpose and the soil of your heart determines what that word accomplishes.

First; the word of the Lord has within it everything it needs to produce life. I'll prove it to you. In **Luke 1.37** the angel Gabriel says to Mary,

"With God nothing will be impossible."

The word "nothing" in that verse is actually multiple Greek words that we translate into the English word "nothing"; the Greek words are pan which mean "all/every", the word ouk which means "no" (negative), which on it's own would be sufficient to translate the word "nothing"...but **Luke 1:37** also has the word "rhema" in that sentence...rhema means "the freshly spoken word of God."

Bill Johnson recently taught on this and he pointed out that a literal translation of this verse goes something like this; "no freshly spoken word of God will be without ability."

The lesson being this; no freshly spoken word of God will ever come to you that does not contain its own ability to perform itself. It's a seed. It contains within itself everything it needs to accomplish its purpose.

What's necessary for that seed is proper soil. God's word has everything it needs to accomplish its purpose, but the absolute scandal of this kingdom is that God partners with the soil of your heart to bring His word to pass in the earth.

In **Mark 4** and **Matthew 13** Jesus tells the parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus says the seed is God's word, and the condition of the soil the seed lands on determines how effectively that seed grows and bears fruit. If you're familiar with the parable then you

know some seed fell on the road, some seed fell on the rocky soil, some fell among the thorns, and some fell on good soil. Depending on where the seed fell, it either bore fruit or it didn't.

Is it the seeds fault that the soil was filled with weeds that choked out the life of the seed? Is it the seeds fault that the soil was too hard and the birds came and ate it? No. The seed has within it all the power it needs to produce generations of life and fruit. The problem isn't the seed, the problem is the soil. The problem isn't the word, the problem is the soil of the heart that word falls on.

This is why Jesus rebukes the Pharisees in [Mark 7.13](#); the soil of their hearts was hardened with religion and tradition. He says,

“You have made the word of God ineffective/powerless because of your traditions.”

This is incredible...and terrifying. Traditions of men, religion, unbelief...these things are kryptonite to the word of God. There's nothing deficient with the word of the Lord, but it can be rendered powerless by the soil it falls on.

This is why James writes in [James 1.21](#),

"In humility, receive the word implanted which is able to save your soul."

In humility (that's the condition of the soil) receive the word implanted, (that's the seed), and the word has within itself the ability to save your soul.

The power for transformation is in the word you receive. But how you receive that word determines whether that power is released over your life or not. **The word is not a lottery ticket...it's an invitation to partner with God to see His word come to pass.**

If I have the seed of His word, then I'm already in possession of future revelation...it just needs time to germinate in good soil. Jesus says to His disciples in [Mark 4.11](#) that it has been given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom. He says in v22 that everything hidden will be revealed and any secrets will be brought to light. He's not talking about our secrets...He's talking about His. He's just looking for someone with "ears to hear" that will be the light that reveals His mysteries.

Conclusion

As this year comes to a close and a new one begins, now is a great time to seek the Lord for His word. He wants to speak to all areas of your life; your relationships, your job, where you live, your family, your finances, your giftings, He has lots to say. Don't take the easy way out and cherry pick your favorite word from the Facebook prophets. Seek the Lord. Position yourself before Him as a priest and believe that because you are a child of God He will speak to you. One of my favorite verses to hold before the Lord when I need direction is [Psalm 25.14](#),

“The secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.”

That's a promise.

If you need help seeking the Lord or discerning His voice, that's what the church family is for. Perhaps you need help on how to hear from the Lord. Grab someone who hears from the Lord, take them to lunch, and ask them how they got to that place in God.

When the word comes, one of the ways you can steward it well is by bringing it to those you are now walking with. Ask them if their spirit bears witness with the word. Even in sharing the word with someone else and testing it you are making steps to steward it well...and God will reward you with more of His voice. This is His promise in [Mark 4.24-25](#),

24 Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

25 For whoever has, to him more will be given...

My standard of measure in hearing becomes His standard of measure in speaking. The kingdom principle is this; if I give Him my ear, then He will give me His voice.

If you see that you don't have someone in your life that you can trust to help you discern the word of the Lord, that's an indication you need to plug into the church family. I've been saying for 2 months that we all need to be in discipleship relationships. Now begins the payoff if you've been faithful to do that...you should have at least one relationship that is being cultivated in the church that can help you steward the word of God over your life.

So when the Lord speaks to you, and it proves to be the word of the Lord as confirmed by the Spirit inside of you and those around you, hold it closely and declare it over your life consistently in this new year.