

**Josh Mangelson 00:17**

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique, spiritual, and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

**Carla Long 00:34**

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long, and today we're discussing what it means to be a prophetic people. Now, I'm not even sure how long ago this was, but a while ago, Community of Christ started saying that we are not necessarily just a people with a prophet, we are a prophetic people. And we work really hard to live that way. But what this podcast is about, and what the series is about is that I'm curious about what that means to our people. So, I'm interviewing a number of people about what that means to them. And today, I'm interviewing Matt Frizzell. Hi, Matt.

**Matt Frizzell 01:12**

Hey, Hi, Carla. Good morning.

**Carla Long 01:15**

Matt is the Director of Human Resources at Community of Christ. And some have said, that's the hardest job in the church. (Matt: yeah, it's pretty hard.) It sounds really hard.

**Matt Frizzell 01:29**

Some days it is. Yeah.

**Carla Long 01:32**

So, tell us more about yourself, besides being the Director of Human Resources at Community of Christ.

**Matt Frizzell 01:36**

I grew up Community of Christ. I grew up in an area that was primarily Christian Reformed, so, I have that experience of being a minority in another culture. Christian Reformed in the US is kind of a minority, but they are really concentrated in West Michigan where I lived. I share that because that really impacted how I understood the world and approached the world. My mom's side of the family came from that Christian Reformed background there. There's a lot of Dutch people in West Michigan. I'm like one half of that Dutch culture, Christian Reformed, and the other half is seventh generation Community of Christ or something. And needless to say, both people thought they belonged to the right church. And so, both sides of my families never really got along on religious terms. I think that's what made me a theologian. I started asking lots of questions like, "Why does Grandma and Grandpa think this way, and Mom and Dad and Grandma and Grandpa on the other side, think this way?" I started trying to deal with complex theological issues since I was a kid. That became kind of a life's calling and I ended up going to school and seminary for a while and it was really, really helpful for me because I

couldn't find what I was looking for in the Community of Christ. I know some people have that experience, like, you know, their spiritual journey takes them somewhere, and they don't want to leave their faith tradition, or maybe they do, but they don't have the resources in it, to take that next step. And I really didn't, I needed to be in a classroom with other people. The MAR wasn't really for me at the time. So anyway, I went to school and started that journey. It opened me up to lots of different things, made me who I am today. I'm really glad to be able to be serving the church after being at Graceland, being part of the seminary, and teaching at Graceland. That's a little bit about me. Oh, and I like motorcycles, camping, and coffee.

**Carla Long 03:54**

Well, who doesn't?

**Matt Frizzell 03:56**

Yeah, that's right. Except not at the same time. It's really hard to camp, ride a motorcycle and drink coffee at the same time.

**Carla Long 04:04**

But if anyone can do it, Matt, you could. So Matt, let's just jump into it. I want to hear what the word prophetic means to you. And what is your understanding of the word prophetic in Community of Christ?

**Matt Frizzell 04:21**

Sure, well, this is a great question. It's very interesting to me. A lot of my influences and thinking about what it means to be prophetic started in Community of Christ, in the Restoration tradition, but broke out of that very quickly because in seminary, when I would talk to my Protestant and Catholic friends, prophetic had a different valence, different usage, different meaning. We always really focused on, we have a prophet, and we have ongoing revelation and so being prophetic people was like you described. It was more about the fact that we see ourselves as prophetic because we "have a prophet." It's kind of like a property thing; I have this, and I'm not sure that's really the best way. I was gonna say it's not accurate too, because I'm not sure it is. And so, I started [thinking that] just having a prophet doesn't mean you're prophetic.

I started digging a little bit and as I jumped into this, there's a whole bunch of things that made more sense. For me, in being a prophetic people lends in that direction. Etymology is interesting. I like [knowing what] words mean and where they come from. The classic meaning of prophet comes from a word that literally means a person who speaks for God. And I understand that in two ways. One is to be pro God, like I'm in favor of God. So, you speak for God in the sense that if God is on this side of the issue, then let's take that side. I too speak for God in the sense of bearing witness or being in favor of God's view on something. You can see that in the world. This quickly goes to what it means to be prophetic. I want to be on God's side of things in the world. I want to believe and build the Kingdom of God, so in that sense, speak for God. But there's also the other sense of it in terms of me speaking in

God's stead. God isn't here to speak, so I will speak for God. That's the classic mystical and traditional understanding of prophet. The prophet literally spoke God's words, what God would say in this case. You can see that there's a very different understanding. One is bear witness and proclaim, I'm on God's side of things. And the other one is I am the one here speaking for God. And that's kind of how we understood in the tradition, how the prophet speaks for the church.

And so having both understandings of prophetic was really helpful because I didn't necessarily see myself as a prophet who walked around and spoke for God. But at the same time, I could be a prophetic person who spoke in God's stead, or excuse me, that's not exactly what I meant. It was opposite of what I meant. I speak for God, I'm on God's side of things. And so that's one of the ways it means to be a prophetic people.

And I thought that was a really interesting, helpful approach because it helps clarify a problem that I see in that carries through from the ancient world. That's actually part of etymology, too. The Greek word for prophet has more of the meanings that I just shared, but it comes from a Hebrew term meaning soothsayer. That's where you get this other side of what it means to be prophetic, in the historical understanding of it, and that is somebody who fortune tells or predicts.

Have you ever seen on the internet, prophets who prophesy and say this is going to happen, or that this is going to happen next, and God is going to do this? That's more of the soothsaying and fortune telling aspect of it. And for me, I need to separate those things. Because I think that confusion of being a soothsayer, and someone who speaks for God, who's on God's side of things, comes from a lot of historical and interpretation issues we have with the Bible. It's a carryover from an ancient understanding. You have to remember that when people wrote scriptures and prophets existed in the ancient world, they didn't have the Weather Channel, they didn't have science and medicine. So, when things happened, they didn't know why. They didn't have predictive tools and understandings of the world that helped them understand [how], A leads to B. And so, a prophet would predict based on things. You would go see an oracle or a fortune teller or a prophet in a religion to see what the future would be. That's more of an ancient understanding, when we decide to go to a prophet to see what the weather's going to be for tomorrow, instead of the Weather Channel. If we go to a prophet to see what's going to happen to our health, instead of a doctor, we fall into that confusion.

I think being a prophetic people needs to be updated. I think we need to think about it as not in conflict, but in harmony with a way we understand [how] the world works. And so, to fast forward and to say make it complicated, but I also think very simple, I think fortune telling is an unhelpful way because there are better ways to think about what it means to be prophetic. It's more about speaking or being on God's side of things in the world. That's what it means to be a prophetic people. And Jesus, for me is a prime example of that because in each of the Gospels, he declares the Kingdom of God and we're called into that Kingdom with him. And so, to be a prophetic people is to be about the work of the Kingdom on

earth. I think that's exactly what Jesus called us to be. That's what it means to me. That was kind of long, Carla. Are you still with me? Or did you go get breakfast?

**Carla Long 10:44**

Oh, I'm back. Sorry, I missed all that. Could you say that again? [Laughing]

**Matt Frizzell 10:50**

I realized as I got into it that this is kind of complicated, but I hope it made sense. There's a challenge to separate prophesying from fortune telling. I think we do need to separate those things, not completely, but separate them out a little bit and go back to the ancient meaning of it in terms of the prophet who stood for the covenant. The prophet understood the political and social world as a world in which when you break the covenant with God, bad things happen. That's how the Prophet saw things working. When you stopped keeping the teachings, when the activities of the powerful and the wealthy were no longer in harmony and in mind with the welfare of the vulnerable, that's when the Prophet starts speaking out and saying, the covenant has been broken, we are not following what we've been told, and bad things are going to happen from that. There's going to be a judgment. I think that is the ancient sense of what it means to be prophetic. It involves some sort of fortune telling, but it's in the sense that when you make political decisions, you don't always know what's going to happen and people issue warnings, or they're in favor of it, but for the prophet, it is all based on that covenant. There's still that predictive element to that what's going to happen in the political and social world. I think that's the part that we want to keep in terms of what it means to be a prophetic people because we want to be on God's side of things. That's how I see what it means to be prophetic. Basically, all that comes down to proclaiming the Kingdom of God on earth, on earth as it is in heaven, and being and speaking for and acting on behalf of God in God's world.

**Carla Long 13:01**

Well, I actually think that's really helpful, Matt. It seems like there's a really healthy way to be a prophetic people and there's also a really unhealthy way to follow a prophet and there's probably a myriad of ways in between that, as well. Both can be unhealthy, both can be healthy, but in a tradition that I'm familiar with, there are people who believe that their President Prophet speaks directly to God and that God or Jesus comes into their room and speaks directly to them. And for me, I see that as something that could be really unhealthy and manipulative and that it could be a way to hurt people. So, I see that as a very obviously unhealthy way to view being a prophet. For me, being a prophetic people means you have this community around you that is also working through these things with you and that you do say the hard things. You stand up and speak truth to power. It's not okay to keep children in cages. It's not okay to persecute people for being who they are, so you say the hard things because you have this community with you, rather than speaking down to people and saying this is what God said, and you better believe me because if you don't, good luck to you.

**Matt Frizzell 14:38**

You're bringing up an interesting problem. I separate this mystical, spiritual experience that the prophet can represent and exemplify in terms of direct access to God, but also the product of that. In other words, you spoke to God, so what? Well, it's about making the world a better place. It's not that simple, as if making the world a better place is simple. But some people find that answer kind of anticlimactic. Making the world a better place is hard work.

And so, what is the point of being of speaking to God, and in speaking before God, and hearing God speak? For me there are some basic rules of thumb. For me, my prophetic experiences, and my understanding of Scripture in particular, always point towards the Kingdom of God on earth. And it always means it in such a way that people are reconciled, people are healed, the valleys are made high, and the mountains are made low. And this is where my understanding of the voices of suffering in the oppressed come into play. Prophetic voices often are the voices that come not from the high places, of presidents or prophets in comfortable and beautiful places. Prophetic voices often come from below. Prophetic voices come from those on the underside of history. Those prophetic voices come from those who suffer unjustly and are ignored, erased, and oftentimes outright silenced. I say often, that's usually the norm, not the exception.

I see that in Jesus. I don't see this as some liberal agenda. Jesus was a peasant. Jesus was a nobody. Jesus was homeless. He was an itinerant minister. It's kind of fun to call him homeless because he kind of was. He hung out with people who were not wealthy or citizens of the empire. He was a voice from below. People who die of crucifixion aren't people of status. They're slaves. They're rebels. They are no one's and they are made examples of, and Jesus fits all of those categories. That's a really helpful way for me to try to create a discernment lens, a process of understanding where those prophetic voices are, and they're usually from the underside. From those places that are silenced and kept quiet. They're usually those voices who can see more clearly because they see what's wrong with what we say is good and perfect and right. They're victims. They've experienced the hurt and the suffering and the injustice, the unnecessary suffering, and the unnecessary injustice of the way we live, and the way we operate.

That's attention in understanding the prophetic. For me, Jesus is that example that goes back, is an excellent touchstone. When I think about the great prophets, I love Steve Veazey. He's a great guy. I love Wallace B. Smith. I love Grant McMurray. These are people that I've known, but my models of the prophets are Jesus, and Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah. They're biblical, and it's not that these modern-day prophets aren't as important, it just means that they have that status because of something that came earlier. Joseph Smith, too, he was a prophet, but he was a prophet based on a model that came earlier. That Biblically centered understanding of what it means to be prophetic is a really important and helpful way to keep touch on what being a prophet means because there needs to be some sort of continuity and some sort of reflection, some sort of informing of what a prophet means by going back to the tradition.

But don't get me wrong, I want to be very clear, and hopefully not too long winded. There are moments when the prophet breaks from that tradition. Jesus would be a good example of it. Jesus read Torah in a completely different way than some others around him. And to even believe he was the Messiah was to break from the dominant traditions of the time. So, it's not that prophets don't break traditions. Matter of fact, they are often the re-interpreters, and the re-inventors of tradition. But at the same time, I think going back and trying to understand how that works, and seeing the tradition is a helpful way to put a gauge on the discernment process so that when we see people today who call themselves prophets, we have a guide, we have a matrix, a map to go look at and to start our discernment process. I kind of took that down a rabbit hole, but I think it's an important one. So, I hope that joined your comment in a healthy way.

**Carla Long 20:08**

Oh, I think so I yeah, I appreciate this conversation. I think this is an important conversation and an important distinction to make. My next question for you is, what is a prophetic moment that you have experienced? What was happening? Where were you? And what makes a moment prophetic?

**Matt Frizzell 20:30**

That's a good question. I've had lots of prophetic moments in my spiritual journey where, in the process of study, my mind was illuminated. And I had those moments of clarity where my heart was set at peace and at ease. But I've also had those deeply personal, prophetic moments where the audience really wasn't the world, the audience wasn't greater society. It was for me. I think it's important to lift up the tension of both.

One is a testimony and I'm going to go over it briefly. It certainly deserves more time, more time than we have on a podcast. I had one of those undeniable moments at a camp when I was a teenager where someone spoke under the influence of the Spirit. They ended up calling me by name and talking to me. Carla, every critical thinking cell in my brain has tried to think about that experience, not tear it apart, but understand it because it was so emotionally overwhelming. It was so life changing. It had such a deep overwhelming impact on me that it was possible to shut my brain off and to accept it as a mystical experience and get taken away in that experience. I wanted to make sure that I was thinking about it clearly, but every time I thought about it, I come back to this undeniable testimony that this powerful encounter happened. It was similar to the Spirit that I felt in my evangelist blessing where the love of God came very personally and profoundly to me and spoke to me and gave me clarity on my life. So not perfect clarity; it's not as if I got a roadmap or a real sense of what exactly my life was going to be about, but the strong prophetic sense of God's assurance and love for me and direction in my life and constant companionship. I want to honor that. I have had those experiences. And I absolutely believe they happen.

Then I also have had experiences that are more related to the kind of prophetic movement of the Spirit in the world and of moving those who are open and interested into the Kingdom. I'll never forget. One of

my favorite classes to teach at Graceland was the life and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King and I wish I had time to read more of it. There's a story that he tells that is kind of a turning point in his life. It's early on in 1956. And at this point, we really don't even know who Martin Luther King really is yet. So, if you were alive at that time, 1956 is early on in his life in ministry. He gets hustled into being the leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association. He agrees to do this, and they organize the bus boycott which gets everything going. The bus boycott is highly effective. In the middle of the night with his family, he gets this phone call. This phone call is one of the many threatening phone calls that Martin Luther King would get in his life. A person on the other end basically said, "You're an outsider here, we're done with your improvement stuff and if you keep this boycott up, and if you keep pushing these issues and organizing and doing your work, we're not only going to kill you, we're going to blow up your house and everyone in it."

Martin Luther King tells the story of getting that phone call deep in the night. He's in the kitchen, puts the receiver down and sits in the fear of that phone call. This is early on in his career and he's thinking about his family. And he's thinking about his work and, as he tells it, the fears creep in. He's beginning to start to think about how he can get out of Montgomery in a legitimate way, so it looks like he did it for the right reasons. I think every one of us can identify with this moment where we start strategizing how to get out of something and saving face, where maybe it's a lie, or maybe it's a bad situation or decision we made, and your brain starts going in a different direction. It's almost as if the fear has the power to turn your spirit around and change the way it's directing.

He tells the story that in that moment he began to pray. His testimony is that as he was praying, he could literally hear the words of someone calling his name, saying "Martin Luther, stand up for truth, and for justice, and for righteousness." He had that prophetic moment for him, and of course, we know what happened in his life. He shares that at that moment, a sense of confirmation and resolve and peace entered him in a way that just vanquished all those fears. I don't think it made him Superman, but it made him strong in his vulnerability, and he was able to move on.

When I hear about stories like that I see the prophetic in the two ways that I'm talking about coming together, where you get not only that spiritual encounter with this powerful Spirit of God, but who is Dr. Martin Luther King, who does he end up being one of the most important figures of the 20th century? And why? Because he engages in a non-violent campaign to change the world to end racism, as he understood it. His dream has not come to reality. Racism is not over. We still live in the shadow, in the dream of his dream. He ends up giving his life to that in that moment. I think that is a great story about how the prophetic works.

I've heard it in stories of people who have struggled with who they are. and oftentimes in the stories of those who are in the sexual minority. They have a prophetic moment. They embrace themselves and live a new life as the true life of who they are. When I hear those stories, I hear stories that are prophetic



stories about a being, a reconciled, whole person committed to the welfare of others and to a better world.

Those are prophetic moments that I've experienced. Every time I've seen a vulnerable people take a stand against powerful forces, there is that prophetic Spirit that just overwhelms me because it exposes the truth of our world. It is what we make it. Our lives are what we make it. If we decide to live in the grand, beautiful dream of the Kingdom that we see in Jesus, and is born out in the prophets, and is testified in the many voices throughout history, it's possible to live sustainably in harmony, it's possible to give our lives to justice and peace, it's possible to love our neighbor and ourselves, and when we do that, God is a part of all of it. Then we can be a part of the Kingdom of God, on earth as it is in heaven. Those are prophetic moments. It's kind of as if there's a signature in those deeply personal moments where you experience reconciliation and wholeness and peace and oneness with the good, Divine Spirit of God and feel Christ's presence and then see that in others and see it multiply outside of yourself. Those are prophetic moments.

**Carla Long 29:43**

That is powerful. That is powerful. I want to bring up something that you said. It's a choice that we have to be a prophetic people. The fear could easily stop us. It's like, I don't want to be the weird one. I don't want to be the one saying this and doing this. I don't want to put my neck out there and have someone call me dumb or stupid or whatever. We have to make a choice to do it, like Martin Luther King did. That was really powerful. Thank you, Matt, for sharing that.

**Matt Frizzell 30:26**

I want to draw a loop back to something. I'll say it quickly, because I'm not very good at that. I think that's funny and sad at the same time. There's a connection between what you just said, and the mistake that many churches make, but the RLDS tradition made, and that is, we forget being a prophetic people is a choice. We say, well, we have a prophet, so we therefore must be prophetic. I've gotten to the point now where it's kind of a facepalm moment or shake my head moment where I'm reading the Bible and I'm seeing these interactions where Pharisees and others are saying to Jesus, well, we're sons and daughters of Abraham, of course, God is on our side. And Jesus is going that doesn't mean squat. You know, God could raise children of Abraham out of the ground. What matters is something else. And we made that same mistake 2000 years later, [when] thinking that being a prophetic people. We have a prophet that makes us prophetic. All you have to do is have one, why don't you get one?

When you think about it, you realize how silly it really does sound. Just because you have a prophet, or you've ordained one, doesn't mean you're prophetic. And the same thing was true in the ancient tradition, just because you are a son and daughter of Abraham, and you live in the covenant, that doesn't mean you're keeping it. That doesn't mean that you are somehow chosen and nobody else is. And of course, this goes to the heart of the Gospel. Jesus starts choosing other people, [he] will work with Samaritans, will work with sinners, will work with prostitutes, will work with tax collectors. Jesus is proclaiming the



Kingdom and planting its seeds wherever there is fertile ground. So, it is not about being selected and being elected and having something that nobody else has. We made that mistake 2000 years later. We think that just having a prophet makes us prophetic. No, it's a choice. And that resonates so clearly. And so, your point is so well taken, it is a choice. And I think that's why it's so important to fall in love with the tradition, begin to identify those prophets around us. and to see how the Prophet is always connected to a living God, acting on earth now, for the sake of the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, not only in our lives, but for the planet. That has to be a choice, because it's not inherent.

**Carla Long 33:19**

I one hundred percent agree. This is powerful stuff, Matt Thanks for bringing it up. So, my last question.

**Matt Frizzell 33:28**

I'm preaching, sorry.

**Carla Long 33:31**

Amen. Brother. Amen. (Matt: I didn't mean to preach.) I think it's important. I hear the prophetic in your words. So, my last question, it's a little bit of a long question, but you're going to take some parts of it and explain it, I hope. The Community of Christ umbrella is pretty large, right? I'm going to give you a list of some different things that have happened in Community of Christ and I want you to pick one or two of them and talk about, for you, what was the prophetic in those times. You have the list in front of you. I'm saying it only for our listeners. So, listeners, this is the list that we have given the people we're interviewing to help us figure out the prophetic in them: the concept of Zion, ordination of women, the LGBTQIA+ movement, diversity in leadership, attention to the poor, the international diversity in going across borders for ministry, nonviolence, the process of common consent, and signal communities. That's a pretty solid list. That's a big old list. So Matt, could you just pick one or two of them maybe and talk about how you saw the prophetic in those things?

**Matt Frizzell 34:49**

I actually want to pick three, but I'm going to go through them quickly and see if you think there's anything more worth discussing in them because each one of those [are part of] my study background. It doesn't mean that I'm like better or cool, it just means this is the way I see those things and have studied them. Every one of those deserve a book discussion, but we can't do that. I put the ordination of women and the embrace of the liberation movement, the humanization movement of the LGBTQIA+ community together, primarily because both of them are united forces against the injustice in the structures of patriarchy.

It's a long story. I won't get into it, but there's an intimate relationship between feminism, women's liberation, but also the full inclusion and understanding of gender fluidity and the sexual minority. I used that term because it was one that was given to me in seminary by others who identified in the sexual minority. I think it was a helpful umbrella term and if it's offensive to anybody, I apologize. I will say, I

wonder if it really is a minority, when you take time to think about how forced heteronormativity is on all of us. If we took a deep look inside of us, maybe none of us really fit the gender stereotypes very well, because we're all a little deviant in our own way, in the sense that we don't fulfill the ideal. The movement to accept and transform our structures of authority has everything to do with the prophetic movement of God, being a non-respecter of persons. I think that is a prophetic movement. When we decided, historically, that men are the only ones with authority, I see the Spirit's movement in upsetting that and then extending it far beyond men and women, to how we understand gender fluidity and how that comes together with same-sex, loving persons and those who are in the LGBTQAI+ umbrella. That is a powerful reminder that God is everywhere and works with all .

Attention to the poor. That has to do with what's prophetic. That is upsetting our worship of wealth. It's classism that so structures the American reality. Class is so funny in America. It's the one thing we will not talk about, and it goes to the heart of American culture. It goes to the heart of American economics. It goes to the heart of the very identity it means to be American. It is a US thing. I don't mean to be exclusivist and hopefully my international sisters and brothers will resonate with this. The US exports its way of life everywhere. So, just because it's US centric does not mean it's not global.

This is part of the neoliberal project, to westernize the world. In that world, the poor, the orphan, the widow, the undesirable, the unmarketable, the unpretty, the whatever you want to name it, whatever fits outside of the desired category, is marginalized, is poor, is diminished, is denied access, is not given the same privilege and opportunities as those who fit in whatever the desirable category is. This is the nature of how market culture and life work. It's all about desire and want and being driven by that. The poor and the oppressed and the marginalized, the fatherless, the stranger, those are the categories of the excluded and that's also where God lives and work. The prophetic in that is upsetting our order of the importance of things and seeing the world and seeing others from a God point of view, to speak for God and the way God sees people, not the way our market sees people or how our policies see people or how our culture sees people and categorizes people. That is absolutely prophetic, because only God can do that. Only God can blow our mind that way, by transforming and upsetting and turning upside down what we think matters and seeing what matters to God.

And then, nonviolence, as a part of that too, because all of these have to do with power. There is prophetic movement in non-violent movements. Nonviolence is a really poorly understood term, and I can't clarify it here. But nonviolence does not mean pacifist, in the sense that there is nonresistance to evil or passivity around injustice. I'm afraid that's what has kind of taken over our understanding. We've begun to think about violence in black and white, where nonviolence is doing nothing, and violence is being justified. It's actually much, much more nuanced than that.

What I think is powerful about nonviolence is that nonviolence actually agitates change. If you look at Dr. Martin Luther King and the philosophies of nonviolent, direct action that have existed in the 20th century and before, nonviolence is a very specific tactic to agitate and change and instigate struggle for

the sake of making change. Many people accused Dr. Martin Luther King of violence, when actually he was just agitating the authorities to expose the violence that was already in the system. That was one of the reasons why King and the King Movement strategized to go to places where they knew nonviolent, direct action would expose the violence of the authorities on unarmed, protesters, constitutionally exercising their rights, African Americans, and other allies in that change movement. Nonviolence is not necessarily without struggling, without its own violence, but it does not use violence and force as a change agent. It exposes it.

Nonviolence is very, very prophetic in and of itself, because it confuses all those categories of legitimized violence or doing nothing. And I think that's really, really important. I see the prophetic in it, in that nonviolence upholds the humanity of the oppressed, but also of the oppressor, and that's something King talked about a lot. In many ways, nonviolence upholds the human rights of the divided classes that are structuring the struggle. In King's case, it was the white dominant culture and African Americans. Nonviolence has the work of God in it because it holds the reconciled status of the oppressed and the oppressor in a unity, as King talked about, where he would uphold the humanity of the oppressors by not causing violence against them. I think that is absolutely prophetic and profound. Hopefully, that says what I mean,

I did end up being longer than I thought, but I think I see the prophetic working in all of those because they upset our sense of power and move us towards a different understanding of power that I think God exposes and reveals to us, in Jesus. I see people on all sides of the spectrum, politically and socially, still think of power in the way humans think of power, in the way that we imagine it in movies. That's the power to control, the power to manipulate. That's what makes superheroes superheroes, right. They can do things. They can make things happen, and cause change in ways that we can't. That's what makes them super. God upsets that sense of power. Absolutely. To bear witness to that power in a God that does not work through manipulation, does not work through force, and does not work through coercion, and control over others or over reality, is very, very different concept of power than many of us in the West understand. And I see God's work in that. I also see work on the cross. That's a mystery to me that I think God is still revealing to us and has the prophetic written all over.

**Carla Long** 44:07

You and I keep thinking that's how we see power, because that is the comfortable way to see power. All those things you talked about, the LGBTQIA+ community, attention to the poor, and nonviolence, they all have this uncomfortable underbelly, right. We want those people to be happy and healthy, but we don't want to have to do anything for that. I'm happy where I am. I'm comfortable in my life and I don't want to have to look at anything that's uncomfortable but being prophetic forces you to look and it forces you to not be in that comfortable place anymore. It forces you to see that other people need help or maybe you need help or that there are some aspects of your life that you need to take a stronger look at. So, of course, we see power in that way, because it's so comfortable. We're used to it, and we understand how to act in that capacity. We have a more difficult time finding out how to act and how to

be in a place where that power gets turned on its head. So, you know, sometimes I just want to live my life, and I don't want to have to think about it. But this is calling us to actually think and act in ways that we can't see a future ahead of us.

**Matt Frizzell 45:35**

What you're describing, I think, is part of what any person who's interested in the prophetic needs to come to terms with. I want to be very clear, to try to understand the prophetic does not mean that you have to send yourself into endless experiences of discomfort and misery and struggle, though, if you're unwilling to deal with yourself, if you're unwilling to deal with your own cultural training, and makeup and identity . . . if you're not willing to deal with what's uncomfortable, if you're not willing to deal with what's counterintuitive, if you're not willing to look at yourself, if you're not willing to see the difficulties, the sinful brokenness of who you are and the world you came from, it's really hard to be prophetic. I think that's because God has a way of resetting every agenda. When you start seeing the world through God's eyes. God has a way of upsetting every category of importance, every value.

The famous theologian, [that] I still love reading, Reinhold Niebuhr, [is] very influential. He wrote an article that talked about the transvaluation of values. What he meant was that God has a way of taking our priority lists and turning them upside down. So, the child becomes more important, the oppressed becomes more important. It's a good rule of thumb to say, if I don't have privilege here, if this makes me uncomfortable, if I have to question who I am and what I'm doing, maybe I need to get closer to the way God sees me and how powerfully I need God in my life. This may be the direction I need to go, which is right [and] completely counterintuitive. We want to go towards the comfort, the easy, the privilege, the exciting, we want to move in that direction, but the Spirit, the prophetic Spirit, moves us deeper into intimacy with God, deeper into the peace of Jesus Christ, deeper into our dependency, and our absolute need for God's present living Spirit in us, with us. And the more you enter into those fragile situations, and those injustices, [you] need to trust God.

I think that's where the prophetic leads us, at least it leads me that way. And I am a baby in this. I'm just trying to get my head around it. I'm trying to get into prophetic 101, right? I'm trying to get into that world where I have to depend on God in the way Jesus did. You're talking about changing your understanding of power, changing your understanding of comfortability, changing your understanding of even what's good, to some degree, and desirable, because that is where the prophetic lives, breathes and sometimes, oftentimes is the most powerful. That's my testimony.

**Carla Long 49:25**

I appreciate it. Thank you, Matt, for agreeing to be on this podcast and agreeing to talk about this. You asked me earlier why you and why should I ask you these questions? I think that you bring in such an interesting perspective. You've made references to how much you talk several times on this podcast and I love listening to you. Maybe I'm the only one in the whole wide world but I always learned something.

**Matt Frizzell 49:52**

My kids don't. My kids are not into that. They're like, another lecture from Dad.

**Carla Long 49:57**

Well, they're teenagers. That's their job. Actually. Well thank you again for being on the podcast. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and your knowledge with us and for, I believe, being prophetic.

**Matt Frizzell 50:10**

Well, thanks I appreciate you listening to my passion. If nothing else that's something that's very healing to me and I find God in that.

**Carla Long 50:17**

Thanks again, Matt.

**Josh Mangelson 50:26**

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