

July 26, 2019

Along the Way:

Climate Change—Evangelist or Prophet?

This week the weather has been absolutely gorgeous! But we have had some uncomfortable days this summer where I started sounding like my grandmother. She was notorious for complaining about the weather. If it was sunny, she would wish that it would rain. And if it was raining, she wished it were sunny. If it was hot, she wished it would cool down. If it was cool, she wondered when it was going to warm up. I'm glad my grandmother doesn't have to worry about the weather as a result of climate change. But I do, and complaining and wishing won't make it change.

In our scriptures there are two roles that show up frequently: prophets and evangelists. Walter Brueggemann in his book *Prophetic Imagination* writes about how the prophet empathizes with the pathos of God. The prophet feels what God feels. Prophets are hyperbolic in their criticism of the world. They are uncompromising in their conviction to ensure that God's people stay on the straight and narrow path, doing what is good and right for people and the planet. They don't seem to mind offending people, using conviction as the impulse to convict.

Similar in passion but different in method, evangelists try to make a convincing case for an issue. Often it is about God's love for the world, the whole world. Evangelists have a missionary mindset, ready to bring people into the fold. They are inclusive and hospitable, using love as the impulse to convert. Both prophets and evangelists can get the job done.

Because of climate change, we have seen winters become milder and heat waves more frequent. In the east, it's made storms wetter; in the west, it made droughts drier. Human infrastructure was strained by melting permafrost in Alaska and larger wildfires in California. It is happening now, and we realize that people have a role to play in what is happening and what could happen. The future depends on our choices.

Our situation has been likened to people conducting an unprecedented experiment with the only planet we have. What's your role? Prophet or evangelist?

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