

WORSHIP GUIDE: SUNDAY, 31 JANUARY 2021

PRELUDE

INTROIT "O Come Let Us Worship" Chancel Choir

HYMN OF PRAISE "God Hath Spoken By His Prophets" TEH#183

*God hath spoken by His prophets, spoken His unchanging Word,
each from age to age proclaiming, God the One, the righteous Lord!
Mid the world's despair and turmoil, one firm anchor holding fast;
God is on His throne eternal, He alone the First and Last.*

*God hath spoken by Christ Jesus, Christ the everlasting Son;
brightness of the Father's glory, with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate, God of God, ere time began;
Light of Light, to earth descending, Man, revealing God to man.*

*God yet speaketh by the Spirit, speaking to the hearts of men;
in the age-long Word declaring God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations, one sure faith yet standeth fast,
God abides, His Word unchanging, God alone the First and Last. Amen.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: Praise the LORD!

Church: With all my heart I will thank the LORD in the assembly of His people.

Liturgist: How wonderful are the things the LORD does! All who are delighted with them want to understand them.

Church: All He does is full of honor and majesty; His righteousness is eternal.

All: He set His people free and made an eternal covenant with them. Holy and mighty is He!

DOXOLOGY TEH#R11 by Bishop Thomas Ken

*Praise God from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

PRAYER OF APPROACH

Almighty God, Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is the light of the world. Grant that Your people, illumined by Your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that He may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth, now and forever. Amen.

RESPONSE "All For Jesus" TEH#193

*All for Jesus, all for Jesus! All my being's ransomed powers:
All my thoughts and words and doings, All my days and all my hours.*

CALL TO CONFESSION Liturgist

Let us confess our sins to God: It is clear that none of us have been fully faithful to God and neighbor and our witness has contradicted His love. In light of this, and in accord with our Savior's instruction, let us make our common confession together praying also for God's gracious forgiveness. Let us say our prayer of confession together...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

Almighty and most merciful God, You know the thoughts of our hearts. We confess that we have sinned against You and done evil in Your sight. We have transgressed Your holy laws. We have disregarded Your Word and Sacraments. Forgive us, O Lord. Give us grace and power to put away all hurtful things, that, being delivered from the bondage of sin, we may bring forth fruit worthy of repentance, and from henceforth may ever walk in Your holy ways; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Minister: Through God's grace we are forgiven, by the mercy of our Creator, through the love of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice and be glad.

People: **Glory to God! Amen.**

RESPONSE "All For Jesus" TEH#193

*Oh, what wonder! how amazing! Jesus, glorious King of kings,
Stoops to call me His beloved, Lets me rest beneath His wings.*

GREETINGS AND CHURCH CONCERNS

CHURCH AT PRAYER Pastor

RESPONSE "All For Jesus" TEH#193

*Let my hands perform His bidding, Let my feet run in His ways;
Let my eyes see Jesus only, Let my lips speak forth His praise.*

OLD TESTAMENT READING (Responsive) Deuteronomy 18:15-20

GLORIA PATRI TEH#R9 by Henry W. Greatorex

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.*

NEW TESTAMENT READING Mark 1:21-28

THE ANTHEM "Take Time To Be Holy" Chancel Choir

SERMON

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

Our words must be followed by our deeds. Let us symbolize the giving of ourselves by the giving of our gifts. Let us continue to worship God in the giving of our tithes, pledges and offerings...

OFFERTORY MUSIC

Hymn Medley

Bro. Glen Cantada

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (In Unison)

We gladly give back to You, Almighty God, what You have entrusted to us. Gladly we offer to You ourselves for Your blessing and for us to bring Your Holy message with zeal and urgency. Use us and our gifts, dear God, that Your love may be felt in the living of our days, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

DECLARATION OF THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH (Article V)

We believe, that God is at work to make each person a new being in Christ and the whole world God's Kingdom in which love, justice, and peace prevail. That the Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

CLOSING HYMN

"How Sweet The Name Of Jesus Sounds"

TEH#157

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.*

*It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.*

*Dear name! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace!*

*Jesus! my shepherd, brother, friend,
My prophet, priest and king,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,
Accept the praise I bring.*

*Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.*

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL RESPONSE

"Father, Give Thy Benediction"

Chancel Choir

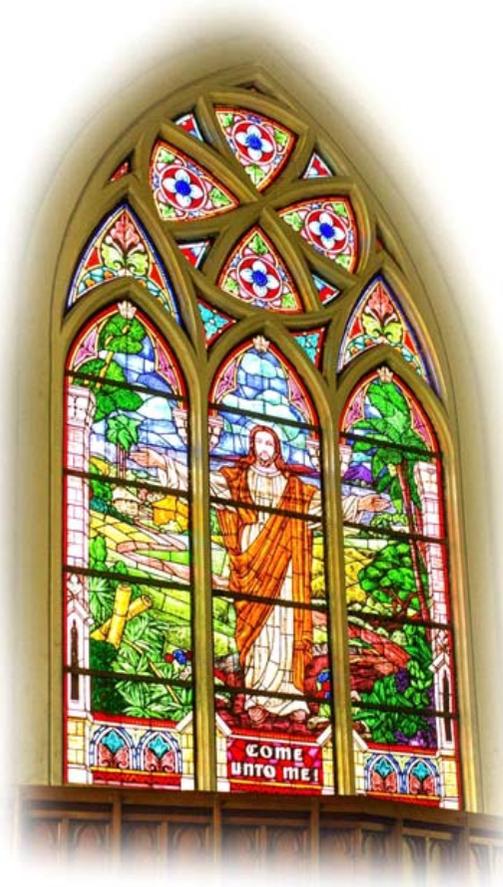
POSTLUDE



**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES
ELLINWOOD-MALATE CHURCH**



31 January 2021



"The True Prophet"

4th Sunday After Epiphany

Membership Growth And
Discipleship (MGD) Sunday

English Liturgy

1660 Dr. A. Vasquez Street, Malate, Manila, Philippines

Tel. 8523.6564; 8536.2970; 8400.9972

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THE TRUE PROPHET

Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Mark 1: 21-28

A blessed Sunday to all of you. The Membership Growth and Discipleship (MGD) Program Ministry seeks to strengthen the spiritual foundation of each member, and to nurture their faith journey through fellowship and active participation in the different groups and organizations within the church.

Though we sometimes think that attendance is its main purpose, the MGD's focus is towards "In-Reach" so that you may meaningfully involve yourselves in the life and ministry of the church through faithful giving or volunteerism.

I know the pandemic has prevented us from enjoying the fellowship that we very much long for. But it has also given us the opportunity to reflect on where we are in our journeys of faith and to see God's direction in knowing His will for us.

Let us pray,

Come holy Spirit come. Come dwell within us. Come dwell amongst us. Break us open and make us new creations. Amen.

What is a prophet? Our initial tendency to think them to be fortune tellers is common given that several Biblical accounts have them proclaiming what is to come. But we should be reminded that what they say IS NOT of their own making. These are the words of God.

We should then understand that prophets are spokespersons. This is actually the literal meaning of the Hebrew word NAW-BEE and the Greek PRO-FAY-TACE. Prophets DO NOT speak for themselves. They speak from Divine instruction.

Even when they are used to expose wrongdoing, it is not due to their own investigation but by revelation from God. Common examples to these painful truths is found in 1Samuel 3 when on the prodding of Eli, Samuel tells him:

" ¹¹The LORD said... ¹²... I will carry out all my threats against Eli's family, from beginning to end. ¹³I have already told him that I am going to punish his family forever because his sons have spoken evil things against me. Eli knew they were doing this, but he did not stop them. ¹⁴So I solemnly declare to the family of Eli that no sacrifice or offering will ever be able to remove the consequences of this terrible sin."

Also the very popular encounter between Nathan and King David on the matter of Bathsheba in 2Samuel 12:

"And this is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I made you king of Israel and rescued you from Saul. ⁸I gave you his kingdom and his wives; I made you king over Israel and Judah. If this had not been enough, I would have given you twice as much. ⁹Why, then, have you disobeyed my commands? Why did you do this evil thing? You had Uriah killed in battle; you let the Ammonites kill him, and then you took his wife!"

Prophets are truth-tellers in response to what is happening in the present as they speak God's message and ONLY God's message. In Amos, 5 the prophet tells the people of Israel:

²¹The LORD says, "I hate your religious festivals; I cannot stand them!

²²When you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; I will not accept the animals you have fattened to bring me as offerings. ²³Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps. ²⁴Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry.

Prophets are spokespersons of God for good or bad news. They declare God's judgements and also share with the people God's promised hope.

If hearing the term spokesperson causes you to roll your eyes because you are a Filipino... I understand.

But this is the work of the prophet. It is to speak God's message.

Our reading from Deuteronomy is a clear indication that even in the time of Moses, he was given a vision of the coming Messiah as he tells the Israelite's God's message: "I will send them a prophet." Moses goes on to say in verses 15 and 18:

¹⁵Instead, he will send you a prophet like me from among your own people, and you are to obey him.

¹⁸I will send them a prophet like you from among their own people;

Take note however that a 'prophet like me' and 'a prophet like you' is not a claim by Moses that the coming prophet, Jesus, is like him. What he means is that the coming prophet will come from the people of Israel. That Jesus will come from

among the Israelites just like one of their brothers, a fellow Jew. The Messiah will come from among the people.

Another way to say it is that prophets are chosen and called by God. By how God knows us, God will use us. These were actually the topics covered in the lectionary text the last two Sundays.

God speaks through the people God chooses. God can speak through anyone, even the most improbable of persons. God can even speak through us. And when that happens we are delivering a HOLY message.

But do our lives preach a holy message for today? Take for example the red-tagging of universities as NPA recruitment centers. Now I share the view that universities should teach our children to think critically and independently. But where is the church when these young people are lured to join the NPA? And even more unfortunate is when the church itself leads our young people astray.

Equally appalling is that these same universities which teach such noble idealism actually produce the most corrupt politicians. In the midst of the global pandemic with millions around the world dying, PROFIT is still the main motivator as the voice of the prophet is silent.

We should ALSO ask the same question: where is the church in calling out these evils?

Where is God's holy message? Where are you with God's truth?

The prophetic words of Moses of the coming prophet is fulfilled in Jesus. And though we are familiar with how Jesus responds to the man with an evil spirit I would like us to focus on what the man said:

²⁴"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you here to destroy us? I know who you are—you are God's holy messenger!"

I know who you are – you are God's holy messenger! Of course this is not a simple instance of recognizing who Jesus was as there was a matter of supernatural forces at work, but there was no mistaking WHO Jesus was and WHAT he was. Jesus IS God's holy messenger.

Actually, EXCEPT for Jesus, all the other prophets were regular people used by God to deliver a holy message.

But will our lives cause people to identify us as God's messengers? Will our lives speak of God's holy message?

I know that the pandemic has affected ALL of us in some way or the other. For some, more profoundly than they would have wanted. But it has given us the opportunity to realize what we really value in life: family, friendships, community. But is God's message shared? I suspect that we cannot even convincingly say we are able to share God's message with those we love how much more find the courage to stand up to the evils that we see from day to day? Share God's holy message with your family and friends and work from there towards a broader circle of sharing.

I was looking at the circular the Ministerial team sent back in May 2020 regarding the community quarantine and it said:

"Regardless of the mode of Community Quarantine, either Enhanced, Modified or General, the EMC Ministerial Team would like to stress that your RIGHT to worship freely is not being challenged.

It is the church's response to Jesus' great commandment to "love one another" that is being challenged.

We read in John 13:34-35:

³⁴*And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples."*

The sanctuary of our church has been closed since the community quarantine began. The CHURCH, the community of faith, has NEVER been closed."

God's holy message is love. It is a love that was shown to us by Jesus in his life, death and resurrection. It is a love that we are all called to share in this most trying of times. It is the marker of those who follow Jesus – then everyone will know that you are my disciples.

The pandemic has actually forced us into more practical applications of our faith. It has even forced us to re-connect with loved ones we would not even bother with during normal times. The pandemic has forced upon us the need to grow in faith. It has, I hope, set you upon a journey towards Christian maturity.

Our theme properly identifies what every Christian SHOULD be: a true prophet. Because the only other kind is a false prophet. Be a true prophet. Amen.