

## **Week 3            Who has spoken/speaks through the Prophets**

**Prayer: A prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit (St Anselm Bishop of Canterbury, 1033-1109)**

O holy Counselor,  
sweetest consolation of the sorrowful,  
gracious Spirit come down now with your mighty power  
into the depths of our hearts.  
Gladden there with your brightness every dark retreat,  
and enrich all with the dew of your abundant comfort.  
Kindle our hearts with holy favour,  
that the incense of our prayers and praises  
may ever go up to you, our God;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

(<https://acollectionofprayers.com/tag/anselm/>)

### **Video:**

Although it is not necessary to watch the short video it gives a short introduction to the context of the study. It is also available at: <https://ourcommonlife.org.au/15-june-2020/>.

### **Introduction:**

We confess that the Holy Spirit gives life, recreates, renews BUT the critical question is *how?* *How* does the Holy Spirit work? *How* does He/She give life, recreate, renew?

The primary confession about the work of the Holy Spirit in the second and fourth century, with the debate and formulation of the Nicene Creed, was that the Holy Spirit *has spoken through the prophets – the Word of God, the Scriptures*. And the Holy Spirit still speaks so today – *through the prophets*.

This confession was made in the light of and in contrast to certain religious, beliefs and traditions, including:

- **Gnosticism** – (*gnosis* is the Greek word for knowledge/to know). This was a dualistic religious philosophical belief in the first and second century holding that there was spiritual (good) and physical (evil) world; a mystical hidden world and a known world. God was of the spiritual world and was thus incomprehensible and could not be known or revealed –this clashed with the confession that God was revealed in Jesus Christ. Regarding Jesus Christ, some gnostics said Jesus was only a spiritual mystical being, others only human; whilst Christianity confesses that Jesus was both divine and human.
- **Marcionism** - Marcion of Sinope (85-110 AD), a son of a Bishop, was expelled around 144 AD for denying that the God of the Old Testament, was the same God of the New Testament. Marcion believed Jesus was the supreme God and God of the Hebrew Scriptures a secondary deity. Marcion compiled a canon excluding Old Testament scriptures and including 10 letters of Paul and a shorter version of Luke.

- **Montanism** – Montanus, another prophet from Phrygia (Turkey) in the second century, around 160 AD, in turn emphasised that God is known through a mystical spiritual experience in the Spirit. Montanus, joined by two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, prophesied whilst under a trance of a spirit and believed that true Christianity is only when one experiences and is filled by the Spirit.

In short, the confession about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed was to clarify the faith of Christians and what they believe with regard to the activity of Holy Spirit. And this is that the Holy Spirit *spoke through the prophets*. Consequently the *canon* (criterion/rule), the books constituting the canon (what we today know as the Bible, Old and New Testament) was compiled and agreed to by the church.

**Sola Scriptura.** This is why Christians are called “people of the Book”. This was endorsed by the Reformation in the credo *sola scriptura*. The Holy Spirit has breathed, inspired the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21) and calls us to *proclaim* them (Isaiah 61; Luke 4:18ff).

The Holy Spirit, *speaking through the prophets*, is the

- *Spirit of Truth* (John 14:17; 16:12ff ; 1 John 2:26-27)
- *Spirit of Revelation* – *revealing the mysteries of God* (1 Cor 2:6-16; cf Ephesians 1 & 3)
- *Spirit of knowledge* – *teaching us* (John 14:26).

**Hermeneutics** is the interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures. Simply stated there are three worlds – the world of the authors, the world of the text, and the world of the reader. Although, we confess that the Holy Spirit, enlightens, reveals and teaches we struggle to understand the interpretation of scriptures. This causes continual pain and suffering amongst Christians as Christians read and understand the Bible differently. There are many examples – nature of marriage, position of husband and wife, position of woman in the church, celibacy of priests. Today, more than two thousand years later we have a different worldview to the authors of the scriptures and we come with new questions about issues not considered then – like, questions about sexual orientation; questions about assisted living and assisted death.

Yet, *how* does the Holy Spirit teach, reveal and enlighten? *Through the prophets!*

The Holy Spirit thus speaks to *us through the prophets*, through the Word of God, also today. Our faith is determined, we live *ex auditu verbi* - we hear from the Word. The Holy Spirit **does not** speak to us:

- through *the church and officers of the church*, no matter how authoritative and powerful;
- through *the wisdom and insight of humankind*, no matter how prominent and influential they may be;
- through *our own human whispers and emotions, our own hearts and own spirit*, no matter how we long and wish them to be true.

We are people of the Book. This is *how* the Holy Spirit works - inscribes us to be – *living letters of Christ, from Christ* to be known and ready by everybody written by the Spirit of our living God (2 Cor 3:2-3).

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:1-6; 15-18; 4:1-6;

**Reflections:** The readings we considered in earlier studies we keep before us, but our focus text this week is **1 Corinthians 2:6-16**.

- Compare the wisdom of God to the wisdom of this age and of the rulers (compare 1 Corinthians 1: 7-2:5).
- What do you think are the thoughts of humankind as revealed by the spirit of humankind (1 Cor 2:11)?
- What do we understand by
  - the wisdom of God,
  - the spiritual truths, and
  - spiritual words?
- How do we know we hear the Spirit of Truth?
- Name an issue/issues that you have been involved in that has been interpreted differently to you by a fellow Christian (eg ordination of women, sexual orientation).

**Closing prayer:**