

**Leading Worthy Lives ~ November 2, 2008**  
**Micah 3:5-12; I Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:1-12: Psalm 43**

We are approaching the finish line of a long and arduous political campaign. Would you believe this has been going on for 21 months? Tuesday, as we fill in those little circles for the candidates of our choice, and feed our ballots into those new-fangled machines that seem to swallow them in one gulp, and as we pause to hope for the best, we can put down our pens with great sighs of relief and completion. This relief will last for a while until the next group of politicians begins to run for office next year. It seems that we never get much of a breather any more

During these past months, in the heat of political discussion, we have heard many prophecies from both sides of the equation about what will happen to us and to our country if one side is elected over the other. Either very good things will happen, maybe even a chicken in every pot, or, we will be doomed by war and rumors of war; further economic downturns, greater social disparity, etc., etc., etc.....

Upon hearing all this, the prophet Micah might have been driven to utter the same proclamation against our modern day prophets as he did against those false prophets of his time. We do not need prophecy that is not based in the truth more than the nation Israel needed it. Micah, and all other genuine prophets, believed truth came from God, not from the desires and whims of humans, wishing to exalt and further themselves. Micah indicated that those who have only their own motives and goals in mind, when they make prophetic statements, will find themselves at the bottom of the heap sitting on a hill of their own arrogance.

Micah was certainly not the only one who warned us to be wary of false prophets. Jesus added to his chorus of caution. Jesus told those who would listen, that the words of Moses, the essence of truth in the Hebrew Bible, were what should be trusted. His hearers were to study those words and follow them. They were not to take as the truth the ways those humans who taught them lived and moved and had their being. He warned that the scribes and Pharisees were using the scriptures for their own gain and interpreting them in their own way to secure their own places while placing greater burdens on the people. It was necessary to heed the words of Moses as they had been collected and saved.

Jesus also warned that those who thought too highly of themselves would eventually be deflated, while those who walked with a measure of humility through life would be honored. This holds true for prophets and politicians and for the rest of us.

In Jesus we have a person who lived what he spoke. He was the whole package. Perhaps, this was part of what attracted people to him—he was genuine. We all know what it feels like to find a person who truly is what he or she seems to be. We look at them and we know “what we see is what we get.” There is a consistency in someone who is genuine, that is part of their appeal to us. What people saw and what we still see in the life and teachings of Jesus is what we get. That’s why we look at our scriptures and, if we think about them at all, we discover that they offer us true guidelines for living. We come to understand that all we say and do and think needs to be tempered by love of

God and our neighbor as our selves—the two greatest commandments. Our lives are never to be spent in self-service.

Paul echoed this in his letter to the Thessalonians. The goal before all those who read and who will read this letter should be to live lives of value based on the truth of the words and ways of Christ. Paul was another who lived a life of positive service to others following his dramatic conversion from prosecutor of the Christians and the new Way to its most ardent supporter. People liked what they saw in him and followed him building small new churches and keeping our faith alive and growing. Paul encouraged and supported their efforts, mediated their battles and loved them in a firm and steady way.

While I, and many others, do not always agree with the way Paul may have interpreted the message of Christ, we need to remember that he pointed beyond himself to Jesus. Reading Paul should send us back to the gospels, the only source readily available to us that tries to help us understand more nearly, more clearly, and more dearly the Way we are to hold in our hearts and live.

All of these readings tie into the journey of life, no matter where we may find ourselves in it. They inform and guide us as we walk through each day. Becoming more Christ-like is the goal of each of us as we make choices, both great and small in life. We must always remember to choose wisely.

*--Amen*