

*The Believer's Gifting and Office:
Prophetic, Priestly, and Kingly*

Victor Matthews

The Believer's Gifting and Office: Prophetic, Priestly, and Kingly

Text: John 17:18; 20:21-23

Introduction

- A. The texts instruct and comfort us as we consider how we can express our love to the Lord Jesus in serving Him.**

“As you sent me ... I have sent them....”

He reminds us that the commission and resources given to Him by His Father is the pattern for the commission and resources He gives to us.

- B. In many mysterious ways the Lord Jesus is seeking to carry on His work in our life and service -- through the presence, ministry, fruit, gifts, and power of the Holy Spirit.**

- 1. This theme is reflected in the Great Commission.**

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt 28:18-20

- 2. This theme is reflected in the promise of the Holy Spirit.**

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. John 16:13,14

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

- 3. This theme is reflected in Mark's comment on the Early Church.**

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. Mark 16:20

4. This theme is reflected in many of the descriptions of believers.

- a. He said He would “Build My Church,” (Matt 16:18) but He has given the “Keys of the Kingdom” to us (Matt 16:19).**
- b. He said He was “The light of the world,” (John 8:12) but He also said “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14).**
- c. He said He “Reconciled us to himself” but “Gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18).**
- d. He said "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases" (Matt 18:17) but He also said “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16).**

5. This theme is reflected in the title of “Ambassadors.”

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Cor 5:20

C. This theme is summarized in the believer's gifting and offices in which we may serve Him as His prophet, His priest, and His king.

- 1. As prophet -- the Lord Jesus speaks forth His Word through us.**
- 2. As priest -- the Lord Jesus dispenses His grace through us.**
- 3. As king -- the Lord Jesus establishes His will through us.**

Comment:

- a. In a legal sense, all believers share these gifts and office. However, many will not know their gifting or ever be led into the enjoyment and power of being used by God in this way.**
- b. It would seem that these three offices overlap. It may be better to describe them as one office with three aspects.**
- c. Some believers may have more freedom and “calling” in one aspect than in the other two. However they do not appear to ever be completely separate in use.**

- d. We must carefully and prayerfully consider the significance of this gifting and calling. Even a superficial grasp of the meaning and importance of this relationship the Lord Jesus has made possible for us -- would lead us to acknowledge that many of our basic problems would be solved -- if we could simply hear from Heaven, receive His grace, and live in His will!
- e. Perhaps the most important question we must now ask would be: "Why -- if we are prophets, priests, and kings, and live among an assembly of prophets, priests, and kings -- are we so often struggling to hear from Heaven, struggling to experience His grace, and struggling to know and do His will?" The answer may be, in part, that we have not prepared ourselves, or been prepared, to (1) understand the importance of these offices and therefore to give them their Biblical priority, and (2) to enter experientially into the fullness of an intimate walk with God that would enable us to internalize and develop, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, those spiritual truths and graces that form a motivating, empowering, and protective context for these offices.
- f. The focus of this introductory paper has to do with pointing out some of the contexts that provide a motivating, empowering, and protective understanding of the believer's gifting and office. At the writing of this paper it appears that there are at least six such contexts,

I. Context # 1 -- That God has Called Us into an Intimate Walk with Himself.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. Matt 11:28-29

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men. Matt 4:19

Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Eph 5:18,19

Comment:

- A. It is clear from the Scripture that this first "context" should be primary in our thinking regarding the prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions.

**B. The reason is evident: our gifting and offices are designed to lead others into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. That is the goal. We are not called to simply introduce people to truths or a way of life. All such activity may be a part of the method as to how we carry out our ministry. However, we cannot lose sight of the truth that only God can change lives. We do not have the ability to lead a person into repentance, faith, or sanctification. The Lord Jesus said, "*Apart from me you can do nothing.*"
John 15:5**

C. As we have discussed above, the prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions that we have been given, are due to His gifting, and they may be likened to an open channel that He will use to reach out to people. Christianity is not an "I-it" kind of a relationship but an "I-Thou" relationship. When we or someone needs to repent -- we must come to the One Who is loving holiness. Only then will the repentance, through that personal relationship, put an end to the issue that caused it and bring transformation. When we or someone needs to change some area of our life -- we must come to the One Who is loving truth. Only then will the desire to change have direction, power and motivation. Every facet of truth is important -- but not in some abstract setting. Ultimately the rationale' and power to change, to think and to live correctly, is found in the One Who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6.

II. Context # 2 -- That God Created Us and His Church for Himself.

Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
(Acts 20:28).

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Eph 5:25,27).

Comment:

- A. The Lord Jesus made the relationship between believers, that is called His body -- the Church, a possibility by His death on the cross. And, on the Day of Pentecost brought that relationship into existence. Acts 2:33; 5:25**
- B. Too often we think of the local assembly as belonging to us and designed for our good. While there are elements of truth there, it is easy to miss the primary truth, that the Church belongs to God and is designed to love, worship, praise, serve and glorify Him.**

C. What a profound difference it will make if we can internalize the truth that our loving ministry to one another as prophet, priest, and king is really a ministry to Him. And, He seeks to be involved in every facet of it.

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matt 25:40

III. Context # 3 -- That the One Plan of our Father is to Exalt the Lord Jesus.

For by him (the Lord Jesus) all things were created ... all things were created by him and for him... so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Col 1:16-18

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose ... that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:28,29

Comment:

1. These passages clearly state and explain how we are to glorify God as individuals and in a Church setting. Our goal is simply to exalt the Lord Jesus.
2. It is easy to state this truth but difficult to maintain it. As to our individual life -- it may be helpful to make a clear cut affirmation at the beginning of the day, such as, "In this day, and in everything I do, I aim to please and glorify the Lord Jesus." As to our relationship in the Church it may help to begin each planning session and each service with some clear-cut recognition of the Lord Jesus. If we, as leaders in the Church keep this focus, it will be easier for individuals to do the same.

IV. Context # 4 -- The Importance of Personal and Corporate Worship.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. Psalm 29:2

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Psalm 100:2

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23,24

Comment:

1. There is very little, if anything, that a believer can do -- that is more important than worshipping God. And, nothing is more powerful and transforming for the believer.
2. The Lord Jesus said that the first commandment was to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. Surely, one of the highest expressions of our love for God is to worship Him.
3. Worship is related to our threefold office as motivation, empowering, and protection. When a believer learns how to worship God, and is consistently taken up in that practice, particularly if he or she is fellowshiping with a Church that understands corporate worship -- that believer will have minimal difficulty in serving as prophet, priest and king.

V. Context # 5 -- The Importance of Personal Sanctification.

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. 2 Cor 4:1,2

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal 2:20

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. Phil 3:10

A. Personal sanctification as an intimate walk with God. (see above)

B. Personal sanctification as internalizing Biblical priorities.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matt 6:33

*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."
Matt 22:37,38*

Comment:

While we will never be perfect this side of Heaven, we must be honest, to be blessed of God and effective in the use of our gifts. We cannot tell others to “Seek first the Kingdom,” or “Love God preeminently” if we are not involved doing so with some measure of success.

C. Personal sanctification as walking in the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Gal 5:22-25

Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Eph 5:18,19

Comment:

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to carry on the work of the Lord Jesus through us. It is important to learn how to “Keep in step with the Spirit” and manifest His fruit in our life. Much of our ministry is non-verbal. And, it is necessary to be able to be led by the Spirit and hear Him speak to us regarding opportunities or approaches to ministry.

In this area of the Holy Spirit it is helpful to know that He has an anointing for any believer who is willing to receive it. The Holy Spirit desires that we be “Full of Him” (Acts 6:5) and have received the anointing that will empower our gifting.

D. Personal sanctification as a life of holiness.

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry ... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Col 3:5-10

Comment:

While not talking about perfectionism, legalism, or asceticism it is important for us to understand and live in freedom from the bondage of our depravity. Honesty is necessary here. Any form of bondage will grieve and quench the Holy Spirit and limit our effectiveness. The pursuit of personal holiness, knowing how to "Put off the old self ... and put on the new self," and how to live with the freedom of the Crucifixion and enablement of the Resurrection in our life -- will provide an open door that can be used by the Holy Spirit to lead others out of bondage.

E. Personal sanctification as spiritual warfare.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Eph 6:10-13

Comment:

Every believer is the battleground in the conflict between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. A knowledge of our enemy will enable us to recognize the oppression that is often found in our daily life. And, a knowledge of the victory our Savior has won over His enemies and given to us as delegated authority, will enable us to live in measurable freedom and help those "Escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" 2 Tim 2:24,25.

VI. Context # 6 -- An Understanding of the Transforming Power of the Word of God.

Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. Matt 12:13

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. John 6:63

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Heb 4:12

Comment:

Our ministry to one another, and to the Lord Himself, is often seriously limited by our practical unbelief regarding the transforming power of the Word of God. Our attitude may be due, in part, to how we often feel overwhelmed by our own personal inadequacies. We must receive healing for the scars across our soul and learn how to live and serve in faith, love, and hope. It is His Word, not ours, that we speak into the lives of those about us. And, He can, as He desires to use His Word powerfully as He did when He healed the man with the withered hand.

Conclusion

- A. While making use of the word “ministry” in the material above, it is helpful to keep in mind that our prophetic, priestly, and kingly “ministry” will usually not occur in a formal setting, such as in counseling or following a Church service. For most believers it will occur in the day by day contacts with people and in casual settings. The Savior’s work may be found in an encouraging word (prophetic) we share with someone, or an opportunity to pray (priestly), or perhaps helping someone discern the will of God (kingly). The example of the Lord Jesus is very helpful here. Most believers can testify that their most helpful and transforming moments in their Christian life came about in a casual setting in which they led by someone into the presence of God.**
- B. Please keep in mind that all the above points must be made a matter of prayer with other believers. The value and power of God’s Word is increased dramatically if we pray in faith, and surrender to the Lord Jesus, so His gifting may be brought to the surface of our life, and we receive His anointing to speak His Word, distribute His grace, and establish His will.**

Victor Matthews