

# Preparing To Harvest

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;  
reap steadfast love;  
break up your fallow ground;  
for it is time to seek the Lord,  
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.  
(Hosea 10:12. NRSV)*

*<sup>3</sup>Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. <sup>8</sup>Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.  
<sup>9</sup>And he said, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!'  
(Mark 4:3-9. NRSV)*

*<sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you.  
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last  
(John 15:16. NRSV)*

## Message 2

### Preparing The Soil

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Ezekiel 13:1-16

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

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### Introduction:

For the next two weeks we are going to talk about preparing the soil. We are going to move from big picture to small picture, from THE CHURCH, to us, to this church, to me and to you. We are going to enter some of the places where being Canadian makes it very hard to be Christian, and I suspect that some of us will not enjoy the journey. Open your Bibles to Ezekiel 13. We are going to look at two passages today that I believe will help us clear away some misconceptions, fears and strongholds that bar the way to harvest. One passage is from the Old Testament and one is from the New. I suspect that you will no longer be surprised to discover the harmony that exists on either side of that divide. As any farmer knows, before a field can be used for harvesting a crop, it has to be cleared of whatever else is on it. If there is shrub or bush, it has to be cut down, rooted out and burned. If there are rocks, they have to be dug up, dragged off and

removed. Only then can you begin to plant and harvest. So it is in the kingdom of God. Ezekiel 13 begins:

### Reading and Understanding Ezekiel 13:1-16

The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup>Mortal, **prophesy** against the **prophets** of Israel who are **prophesying**; say to those who **prophesy** out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the Lord!'

#### 1. **Right before a crisis hits the people of God, there is usually an outbreak of prophesy; both true and false.**

The opening verses of this chapter are cluttered with words about prophets and prophesy. Now some people try to use this chapter and all of the very harsh things God says in it against false prophets to argue that God doesn't like and doesn't sanction prophecy, that its dangerous and should be outlawed. But notice that the passage begins with the phrase: "The word of the Lord came to me". That's a prophesy! The opening words of God in this chapter are: "Mortal", or some of your Bibles have "Son of Man", "PROPHESY!" The opening word of God is a command to prophesy, so prophesy in and of itself is not a bad thing. That's an important point church, because we have always struggled with this. False prophesy is so dangerous that the sensible thing to us, it seems, is to outlaw it altogether. In the early church this was the exact argument that people were putting forward. People were saying: "We have been so badly deceived by false prophets, we ought to just outlaw prophesy altogether." The Apostle Paul rejects that saying:

<sup>20</sup>**Do not despise the words of prophets,** <sup>21</sup>**but test everything;** hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21. NRSV)

"Don't despise prophesies!! Just test everything against the Scriptures. Reject what is false, hold on to what is true." That is the course of wisdom church. Understand this my friends, in the era that precedes the judgement of God falling upon the church and the earth, there will be an outbreak, an absolute RASH of prophesy. Test everything. Don't reject it all out of hand, but test everything.

Let's jump back into the text. I'll read verses 3-12 and then draw a few things to the surface for us to look at:

<sup>3</sup>Thus says the Lord God, **Alas for the senseless prophets** who **follow their own spirit**, and have seen nothing!

<sup>4</sup>Your prophets have been **like jackals among ruins**, O Israel. <sup>5</sup>You have **not gone up into the breaches, or repaired** a wall for the house of Israel, **so that it might stand in battle** on the day of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>They have prophesied falsehood and lying divination; they say, ‘Says the Lord’, when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfilment of their word! <sup>7</sup>Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination, when you have said, ‘Says the Lord’, even though I did not speak?

<sup>8</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have uttered falsehood and prophesied lies, **I am against you**, says the Lord God. <sup>9</sup>My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, **nor shall they enter the land of Israel**; and you shall know that I am the Lord God. <sup>10</sup>Because, in truth, because **they have misled my people**, saying, ‘**Peace**’, **when there is no peace**; and because, when the people build a wall, **these prophets smear whitewash** on it. <sup>11</sup>Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out.

## **2. Prophets who speak out of their own thoughts and feelings rather than the Word of the Lord are FOOLS and FOES of God.**

“Alas for the senseless prophets” or as the NKJV has it:

“Woe to the **foolish** prophets... (NKJV)

The Hebrew word there is *naw-bawl* and means “stupid” or “foolish”. This is a bold statement, after all, people might rightly have asked Ezekiel: “Who are you, a prophet yourself, to call another prophet stupid and a fool? How can one prophet judge another? Why is the House of the Lord divided against itself? Why can’t you clergy all just get along?” Now, that’s a very good question and one I’ve asked myself many times. “Paul, who are you to think that you would speak a word against an idea held by another pastor? Paul who are you to say that another man’s vision of ministry is foolish or even stupid? Why can’t you feel at peace with your fellow clergy?” I ask that question of myself and I’ve had others ask it of me. I received a well meaning letter not too long ago from a dear member of this church. The letter asked the same question: “Pastor, who are you to criticise ideas held by other pastors? Who are you to label their way of doing ministry as foolish? Who are you to divide the Lord’s House? Why can’t you clergy folks just all get along?” What is the answer to that question? How can one prophet or preacher speak against another? The answer is that it is not the degree, not the I.Q. and not the congregation size that proves who speaks for the Lord – it is the WORD OF GOD. The stupid prophet is the one who shares his own mind, his own opinions and his own feelings and the wise prophet is the one who speaks the WORD and MIND OF GOD. Even a prophet with no natural

intelligence, if he speaks the truth of God is worth a thousand SCHOLARS who speak their own mind and foolishness. The Apostle Paul said:

the foolishness of God is wiser than men (1 Corinthians 1:25. NKJV)

You see my friends, if you preach from the Word of God then you can be BOLD AS A LION because then it's not about you, you may have degrees, you may not, it doesn't matter because it's the WORD OF THE LIVING GOD and even the foolish parts of it are wiser and grander than the loftiest thoughts of humankind. But people will say, "well isn't it all a matter of personal interpretation?" Friends that is one of the oldest lies in the book. It is NOT A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION, there is TRUTH and there is ERROR. The Apostle Peter said:

<sup>20</sup>First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation (2 Peter 1:20. NRSV)

Prophecy is not a product of interpretation. The meaning of the Scripture does not have to be conjured or divined like a palm reader telling you the mysteries of your life by staring at your tan lines, if our hearts are pure, if we have no predetermined agenda, if the Holy Spirit is within us as teacher, if we study to show ourselves approved, workmen who needeth not be ashamed then the Bible says that we will RIGHTLY divide the Word of truth. Even more, like the Apostle Paul we will be able to speak into specific situations and say: "While I do not have a direct Word from Scripture on this, I believe I have the Spirit". He said that very thing in 1 Corinthians 7:40. The Apostle was so steeped in the Word of God, so taught of the Spirit that he could say, "Now sister, I have no direct quote from the Bible on this, but the Spirit tells me to tell you...." That's where all real prophecy comes from! From knowing the Word of God and the Mind of God that you may speak the true Word of God into every situation, usually with a direct quote, but failing that, with confidence in the Holy Spirit. A real prophet can do this, a false prophet speaks his own thoughts and feelings and if challenged hides behind the lie: "that it is all a matter of personal interpretation". No it isn't. If the Word of God is true, then things are true or they are not true. Interpretation has very little to do with it.

A fool who speaks his own mind to the people of God when he should be speaking the Word of God is not just a fool, he is an enemy of the Lord. The Old Testament is shockingly clear on this:

I am against you, says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 13:8. NRSV)

The New Testament, if anything is MORE CLEAR and maybe even a little more harsh.

Galatians chapter 1 says:

there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, **let that one be accursed!** <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! (Galatians 1:7-9. NRSV)

Paul took that seriously. In one of his churches some Jewish intellectuals were bullying his Gentile converts by saying that the people all had to become Jews before they could embrace the Jewish Messiah as their Lord and Saviour. So all of these poor Gentile men are lining up for circumcision to become Jews. Paul becomes irate and writes a letter in which he says of his opponents:

<sup>12</sup>I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! (Galatians 5:12. NRSV)

That's not very nice! That comment would win the Apostle some NASTY e-mail in this church. "Pastor Paul," they would write, thankfully not to me, "why can't you play nice with the other ministers? Why must you be so crude, sarcastic and negative? If you can't say something nice, you might want to consider saying nothing at all". I might write that letter myself, I'm not used to that kind of language in the household of God. That sounds like a man who appreciates the fact that if you stand in this pulpit and suggest that you are speaking on behalf of the Lord God to the flock, you better stick to the text my friend. If you stray by reason of stupidity, laziness or mean spiritedness, you place the people of God at risk and you become God's enemy. If you are not a sheep then you are a wolf and the shepherd kills the wolf. False teaching in the house of God is not just unfortunate, it is DEADLY and it has to be treated as such. We need to stop being Canadians here, and we need to start being people of the Word.

Let me say one more thing about this section of the text:

- 3. A false prophet cares more about his livelihood than his flock. He undermines rather than buttresses and he speaks only of peace and prosperity.**

Look at verse 4 again, I know it's been a few minutes now:

<sup>4</sup>Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins (NRSV)

Some of your translations have foxes, the point is the same. The house of God is in ruins and instead of rebuilding, they are just happy to have many places to build a den. A ruinous house is great for the business of ministry! When people become ignorant of the Word of God, keeping your job in ministry is a lot easier. You can tickle ears, gather crowds, tell lovely stories and feed them Chicken Soup for the Christian soul and they'll give you yearly salary increases while they die and go to hell. A true prophet cares nothing for those things. The Apostle Paul said:

<sup>11</sup>Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. <sup>12</sup>I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. (Philippians 4:11-12. NRSV)

“Don't think for a second that I am petitioning for a pay raise,” says the Apostle. “I've been well paid and poorly paid and it means nothing to me.” That is the attitude you have to have if you are to be of any real use in the house of God.

The false prophets also undermine rather than buttress the people against the coming judgement.

Look again at verse 10:

<sup>10</sup>Because, in truth, because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace', when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, **these prophets smear whitewash on it.** (Ezekiel 13:10. NRSV)

The people build a life and a nation that is weak and flimsy and instead of pointing this out, which, heaven forbid might offend people, the false prophets white wash it. They confirm people in their ignorance and leave them at risk to ruin. I was speaking with Dr. Craig Brannan recently and he expressed serious concern that a very high percentage of the Christians he is treating whose lives have collapsed into complete ruin all come from churches that do not preach the whole counsel of God's Word. They receive a skim milk version of it and as a result, people who think of themselves as Christians are building their lives WAY OUT BEYOND the boundaries that God has established. And when the ground starts to shake, as inevitably it will, the lives of these sheep collapse into complete ruin and despair.

False prophets don't want to talk about sin, they don't want to talk about judgement, they don't want to talk about repentance because it's bad for business and it's hard to get a pay raise out of people who've just been told they're sinners. The irony is that the people call them loving, but they're not. If they loved their flock they would warn them about the pit they were falling into.

#### **4. When the shake of judgement comes, the work of false prophets is obvious to all.**

Let's look at the end of this passage:

<sup>12</sup>When the wall falls, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the whitewash you smeared on it?' <sup>13</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord God: In my wrath I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger there shall be a deluge of rain, and hailstones in wrath to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish within it; and you shall know that I am the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Thus I will spend my wrath upon the wall, and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it— <sup>16</sup>the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for it, when there was no peace, says the Lord God.

Jesus called this the fruit test:

<sup>15</sup> 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?' (Matthew 7:15-16. NRSV)

If a prophet's flock shows nothing but collapse and stink fruit, then he is not speaking for God. Now this doesn't mean that there will be no struggles in the flock, even Jesus had a Judas and a Peter; one whose struggle ended in death, another whose struggles were overcome. This isn't about perfection, this is about the general trend. By the way, failing this test had a real bad consequence. Jesus finished this teaching by saying:

<sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Thus you will know them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:19-20. NRSV)

Listen to me church, there is no position in all the world so hazardous as this one. Standing in this pulpit ought to put the fear of God into a man. The Bible says:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3:1. NRSV)

Standing in this pulpit is serious business and the people in it are held to account in different ways than those who do not. We all know Matthew 18 do we not? There is a nice and tidy

format described for processing disputes between church members. It begins with the very handy concept of going first to your brother in private. That sounds wonderful, and if we did that, there would be no gossip, no slander and no silliness in the house of God. Praise the Lord! Why then when the Apostle Peter starting teaching error in Antioch did the Apostle Paul respond thusly:

when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; <sup>12</sup>for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. <sup>13</sup>And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, **I said to Cephas before them all**, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’ (Galatians 2:11-14. NRSV)

Peter’s error as a preacher and prophet was so potentially serious that it had to be rebuked publically. This was standard teaching in the church. The Apostle Paul gave instructions along this line to Timothy who was overseeing a church in Ephesus. He said that if an elder or teacher persisted in sin or error:

rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear. (1 Timothy 5:20. NRSV)

God takes the error of his priests and prophets very seriously because it puts the whole flock at risk. Is he unwise to do so? When a country is at war, what is the penalty for a soldier who falls asleep on watch duty? Death. One man’s stupidity puts the whole people in danger of ruin.

Turn over in your Bibles to the New Testament. We will move much quicker here because these two passages share so much in common that has already been said. Look at 2 Corinthians 10:1 and following:

### **Reading and Understanding 2 Corinthians 10:1-6**

I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away!—<sup>2</sup>I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards.

Let me say two things here:

#### **1. The state of the flock determines the attitude of the shepherd.**

Paul is being a bit tongue in cheek here. The criticism of Paul is that he was very gentle and easy going in person, but then he wrote these terribly harsh letters from a safe distance away. When Paul had planted the church in Corinth he had come off as a very gentle, peaceful, Jewish Rabbi type. A little bit geeky and bookish, certainly not a fire brand prophet. Then, months later, having moved on elsewhere, he receives word that some of his converts are still deep in sexual sin and have not felt the need to repent of that. He writes back a very SEVERE letter threatening all sorts of terrible things. He says for example:

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgement <sup>4</sup>in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:4-5. NRSV)

Nothing in their personal experience of Paul prepared them for this harsh letter. It was hard to imagine the squinty eyed geek of a Rabbi thundering down about handing people over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. It didn't fit. Paul warns them:

<sup>21</sup>What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? (1 Corinthians 4:21. NRSV)

I personally find that just about the funniest verse in the Bible, but the point the Apostle is making is that the state of the flock determines the tone of the shepherd. When you are grazing peacefully on the green grass of God than the shepherd appears like a rather quiet, gentle old rabbi. When you are guzzling up slime from the sewer of human debauchery then the shepherd appears like the wrath of Almighty God. This is the difference between a real shepherd and a fox or jackal. The fox or jackal makes himself at home in the fallen house, the real shepherd, the real prophet is not comfortable and not happy in the ruinous house.

## **2. The devil fights by proxy.**

That may seem obvious but it is worth saying. Paul writes:

I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by **daring to oppose those** who think we are acting according to human standards. (NRSV)

He was opposing PEOPLE in Corinth. People sometimes say unrealistic things: “Pastor, I don’t mind you coming out against IDEAS, but when you seem to be speaking out against PEOPLE I think that is out of bounds.” Friends, what does God do that he does not do by proxy? Through human agents, loyal to his kingdom? Nothing. Likewise, what does the devil do that he does not do through human agency? Nothing. You have to speak against the agent, even though the agent is not the true enemy. All truth, as all untruth, is incarnated. The Apostle Paul did not speak against Peter’s ideas, he rebuked Peter. Publically. Peter repented and the relationship was restored. Peter later became Paul’s booster and booking agent. In the last letter he wrote before his death he commends his disciples to Paul’s ministry saying:

So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, <sup>16</sup>speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, **as they do the other scriptures** (2 Peter 3:15-16. NRSV)

As Peter’s life is taken from him with his last breath he commends his flock to Paul’s influence, calling Paul’s letters SCRIPTURE, the first time they received in recorded history they were accorded that honour. Peter was not the enemy but he was the agent. Paul rebuked Peter and Peter repented. A real prophet, when truly wrong, will repent and come in line with Scripture. A false prophet will say it’s all a matter of interpretation. Regardless of the outcome church, it is naive in the extreme to think that you can debate IDEAS without confronting people. You cannot wrestle the wind. False truth is incarnated.

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; <sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments <sup>5</sup>and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. <sup>6</sup>We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:1-6. NRSV)

### **3. Ministry is war and the Word of God is a weapon.**

The church of Jesus Christ has forgotten this, nowhere more so than in peace loving Canada. We are at war. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, no, the people are just agents, our battle is against the spiritual rulers, but it is a BATTLE, and if it is a battle than we are at WAR. The devil has taken all the fight out of the people of God. The false prophets tell us all about peace and prosperity and we have become fat and content with the world the way it is. We don’t pray: “Thy kingdom come” anymore, because we are the kings of the kingdom that is already here!

We've not only surrendered, church, most of us have changed sides and we don't even know it. How did we get here? Did not Jesus say:

34 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34. NRSV)

This is the same Jesus who said:

the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Matthew 11:12. NKJV)

If you are visiting today and you go to a church that doesn't sound like it is at war with the fallen, idolatrous culture of this world then you don't go to a church. You go to a church of mixture, a shrine of baal worship and God is not present with you. How can I say such a terrible thing?

Because the Bible says it:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world (1 John 2:15. NRSV)

Ministry is war. The kingdom of God is in violent conflict with this fallen world and the Word of Truth is our weapon. The Bible says:

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, **sharper than any two-edged sword**, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12. NRSV)

It also says take up:

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17b. NRSV)

Oh, we like these verses don't we? We like to stroke the sword and shine it up. We like to put it on display in a shiny glass case, but we don't want to use it like the deadly weapon that it is. It's one thing to talk about being sharp enough to separate joint from marrow but quite another to wield it in anger. But the Bible doesn't tell us to admire the sword, it says to use it and it describes what that looks like. When the people of God fall deep into error and deception the response of the Lord is to send someone who wields the sword:

<sup>5</sup>Therefore **I have hewn them by the prophets,**  
**I have killed them by the words of my mouth,**  
and my judgement goes forth as the light.

<sup>6</sup>For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings. (Hosea 6:5-6. NRSV)

God says: “I will restore you to proper worship or I will kill you in the effort and I will do it by a prophet wielding the Word of God like a sharp double edged sword.” A few chapters later the Bible says again:

<sup>10</sup>I spoke to the prophets;  
it was I who multiplied visions,  
and through the prophets I will bring destruction. (Hosea 12:10. NRSV)

This is a brilliant use of word play in the Hebrew. The word for destruction is a word that means two things, a little bit like how the word “ball” in English means many things. The Hebrew word *daw-mah* can mean destruction or it can mean teaching by parable. The prophet is saying the words that I speak on behalf of God can be your destruction or your salvation, depending on how you decide to hear. Or as another prophet liked to put it: “Let he who has ears to hear, hear.”

## **Conclusion:**

We are out of time. You may be sitting here asking yourself: “Who is this message for? Is he preaching to me?” Let me say again: this message is for THE CHURCH, which, of course, we are a part of. Particularly this message is for the Canadian church. We have muzzled the prophets in the church by telling them to be polite. We have rewarded the ticklers and rejected the truth tellers but it is not the sheep who are to blame. We would not blame children who got diabetes because they asked their parents to feed them skittles every night for dinner, we would blame the parents who ought to have known better. So most particularly this message is for the clergy, the North American clergy in general, but the Canadian clergy in particular has become stupid and dangerous. They have become career ministers instead of Gospel prophets and pointing this out has become heresy. That has to stop. If we are to return to fruitfulness then we have to return to truthfulness and let this truth be known, it is not unchristian to declare that there is real prophecy and false prophecy in the church, it is not unchristian to declare that there are good shepherds and false shepherds among the people of God, it is not unchristian to declare that there are skilled builders and foolish builders working within the house; it is only UNCANADIAN, and long before we are Canadians we are Christians in this place, amen

church? The people of God are on the verge of total ruin for lack of knowledge and the Bible says:

<sup>7</sup>For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. <sup>8</sup>But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2:7-8. NRSV)

This message is also intended to serve notice that while I have no intention of making pastors my enemies, I do know that the real enemy fights by proxy and that many ministers in this country and even in this town have fallen into his service whether willingly or unwillingly I know not. The stakes are high and I will not sacrifice the flock out of concern for the ego of shepherds. And in some last sense this message is for me. This message is to scare me out of my “who am I Lord” paralysis. I will speak even unto Pharaoh the Word of the Lord as long as he gives me breath. So help me God.

We are going to clear this field unto harvest, church. One stone, one stronghold, one fox at a time. We are going to do it by the Word of God and with the Spirit of God as our teacher and our guide. And all God’s people said: Amen.