

## GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

30.11.14

### **Review of recent prophetic words for the church - Joss Bray**

We are so blessed that God speaks to us in many different ways.

That can be directly to us as an inner or occasionally audible voice, through the bible, prophecy, visions, dreams, pictures, each other, circumstances and so on.

I want to focus on prophetic words that we have received from various sources as a church, particularly those in the last few months.

Prophecy is very important to the church. This is what Paul wrote:

<sup>1</sup>CO 14:1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

<sup>2</sup> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. <sup>3</sup> But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

Remember - prophecy is when God speaks directly into our lives and its characteristics are to strengthen, encourage and comfort. And it is a gift of the Holy Spirit and to be eagerly desired by everyone - not just a select few "super spiritual" Christians.

In fact, prophecy should be one of the foundations of any church:

EPH 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

### **Past prophecies for the church**

The church here has been founded on prophetic words from several years previously when the Aln Valley group from County Church met regularly in Shilbottle. Others have been added - particularly from the the Safe Harbour fellowship who themselves carried prophetic words received over the years.

Gateway has had prophetic input from our friends at Emmanuel Church Durham on 2 very significant occasions over the last 18 months.

Our members here have brought prophetic words as well, and this pattern of external and internal prophecy needs to remain built in as a normal part of our church life together.

## **Timing**

Just a word on timing. It is notoriously difficult to discern timescales from prophecies. People will be able to recount experiences in their lives where they have received words from God from reliable and tested sources that have taken years to come to fruition - and even some that have not borne fruit at all yet.

This is normal. Personally - I have been looking back at prophetic words over me that were given in 2003 and they have only really started to blossom, as it were, in the last 2 years. Others will be able to recount similar experiences.

The bible is full of people who waited years and years for the outworking of a word from God -and some didn't even see it in their lifetime. But - God is faithful and he shows us his plans for a reason - remember they are to strengthen, encourage and comfort. If we know God has spoken to us then we can cling on through the most difficult times - both individually and as a church.

## **Evaluation**

Not all "prophetic" words are from God. That is not necessarily because the giver is deliberately trying to mislead or manipulate - although that does happen. Mostly it is because people are genuinely trying to strengthen, encourage and comfort, but they do it from their own resources rather than delivering a message directly from God. Remember what Paul wrote:

1CO 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

That is why prophecy is supposed to be tested and weighed:

1TH 5:20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. <sup>21</sup> Test everything. Hold on to the good.

1CO 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

So clearly, the early church had the same issues to deal with that we do - it is nothing new and should not restrain prophecy.

### **Recent prophecies for the church**

Here are some recent ones which I think pass the testing and weighing criteria - although it is up to all of us to weigh them up for ourselves. They won't be 100% accurate - what is perfect this side of the Kingdom of God anyway? But we test them, take the good and what resonates in our spirits and what strengthens, encourages and builds up.

So let's look at them and then gather our thoughts about what God is saying to us through them - although sometimes it is immediately obvious!

### **The visit from Emmanuel Church Durham 9.11.14**

Go and pray for healing for people - and the good news will spread. Expect the miraculous. Reach out to all the villages and towns in North Northumberland.

We should do what Jesus did - teach, proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, and heal. There are many lost sheep.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few - but Jesus gives his disciples authority and sends them out.

There was a picture of the church as a garden with all types of different plants in and a wall around it that God was building.

There was another picture (from Sheila) about the church being a hospital where workers needed to be prayed in - that was also surrounded by a wall.

### **What does that mean for us?**

It is a reminder that the kingdom of God is not about words:

1CO 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

God wants us to step out and pray for healing for people and expect him to act. The miraculous will become the norm! It is a

question of going and reaching with the love and compassion that comes from Jesus. There is power and authority in the name of Jesus that we have hardly begun to touch yet. And there are many lost sheep to reach out to.

We have two pictures of the church with a wall round which God is building.

The first is the garden with different plants - that us isn't it! We are all different and beautiful in our own ways. There are no weeds here - do not think you are a weed in God's garden. You are not here by accident or by some mistake. The best gardens have all sorts of plants for all sorts of purposes and all planted deliberately for a reason.

The second is the hospital where people come to get healed and restored and recuperate. There is always a need for more workers in the hospital - there is plenty of work to be done - in fact there is a constant flow of "patients" coming in. This hospital is different to normal ones because the patients then can become the workers themselves and so on.

I believe the wall that God is building is very reassuring. It is designed to protect us from attacks - not to keep people out! He knows that the church will be attacked in many ways but he is keeping us safe so we can grow and flourish in the midst of it.

### **Men's conference in Durham 18.10.14**

There was a picture of a big set of millstones that were grinding wheat into flour - and this is what was to happen to the church. However, we should not be afraid of this.

There was a word that we are not out on a limb - we are at the centre of what God is doing in this area.

And the church will be even more beautiful than the county it is in.

### **What does that mean for us?**

Again we are being prepared for times of pressure. The miller takes raw wheat and produces really useful flour to make edible things. The process appears tough but the result is really good -

pure and ready for use. Let us not be surprised by pressure on us individually and as a church - that is part of God's refining purposes and will produce a good result.

We are also not on our own in this - God is already at work here - and has been over centuries. We are part of the fulfilment of prophecies that far earlier churches would have had. We are at the centre of what God is doing here. How good is that!

And the church will be even more beautiful than the countryside it is in - we may not think of ourselves as beautiful - have a look around! But even our feet are beautiful when we are on kingdom business:

RO 10:15 ..... "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

### **Adam Finn 23.11.14**

Gateway will bring God's new creation to Northumberland and we will be ambassadors for Christ.

God will take us into situations and to people that others have rejected - and he is calling us to bring people in from the highways and byways.

God is going to bring the "worst of the worst" and then turn them into the "best of the best".

We have a ministry of reconciliation that God has called us to.

### **What does that mean for us?**

This church is bringing something new as we represent Jesus where we are. As we know already, we are called to help the poor and needy, the despised and rejected, the sick and in prison. God wants us to go out and bring people in and he will also bring people to us.

There will be the people who are marginalised in society - labelled as useless and written off who will be transformed into citizens of the heavenly kingdom where they will be called sons and daughters of God. They will receive forgiveness, joy and a purpose for the present and a hope for the future.

They will be reconciled to God and to others. Things that were broken and lost will be restored. Whole communities can be affected by what God is going to do through the church.

God has said he will do these things and we are stirred by them and we are beginning to see him working things out.

It is a glorious vision and worth going for isn't it!

### **To end with - a previous picture**

This was from Maureen last year and is worth highlighting again now:

"The picture was of the chimes on a wind chime. They were still and there was no sound. Then a gentle wind began to blow and they started to move and knock against each other causing a beautiful sound. I felt that God was saying .... that it will be God's Spirit leading each of us to the 'divine encounters' that will lead to the growth of Gateway church."

There we are - can you feel the wind of the Spirit?

Are we chiming together causing a beautiful sound?

Let's not lose heart when problems arise and the pressure is on - we have great prophetic foundations that can strengthen, encourage and comfort us as we are filled by the Spirit of God who will enable us to do everything that he has called us to.