

If All Were Prophets

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I bet you have never heard of Medad and Eldad.

This is one of those Bible stories that is a little off the beaten track.

Here's what happens.

Moses is feeling worn out by the demands of leading his people. And so he complains about it to God.

And God says, “gather 70 elders in the tent with you, and I will send my Spirit to be in them, the same Spirit that is in you. They shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.”

So Moses does as he is told, and the Spirit comes down into the tent and the 70 elders begin to prophesy. That is they begin to speak, and teach, and lead, with God's own power and authority.

The Spirit is in them, and it shows.

But then there's Medad and Eldad. Not elders. Not invited to the tent. Not part of the plan.

Who knows how it happened, maybe they were walking by the tent at the right moment, or someone didn't close the flaps tightly enough.

But something of that divine Spirit that was meant to be contained in that tent with the elders over ran the boundary and fell upon these two. Medad and Eldad. Two ordinary people, down in the camp with everyone else.

And— lo and behold— they began to prophesy.

That is they began to speak, and to teach, and to lead with God's own power and authority.

The Spirit was in them, and it showed.

The tattle-tales ran off to tell Moses.

"Medad and Eldad are prophesying in the camp!" "Stop them!"

Moses just laughs and says, "Don't be jealous for my sake. I wish all God's people were prophets."

I love the story of Medad and Eldad because it reminds us that when we invite God's spirit into our lives and into our world, it is rarely contained precisely to the places we would want it to be.

It reminds us that the spirit of God is not subject to our ideas of right and wrong, in and out. It tends to crash over the boundaries we carve out, and touch the world in unexpected ways.

I just wanted you all to have a fair warning, because in just a few minutes we're going to be calling on God's Spirit, as we pray for, and bless, these confirmands.

And when we all together confirm the covenant first made in their baptism, we might think we know exactly what we are doing.

We are welcoming them into our church, as full members, same as me and you.

And that is true. We are.

But don't be surprised if God does something a little unexpected through with them..

After all, being a member of a church in the our congregational tradition does not mean that we have it all figured out. It does not mean that all our questions are answered, or that all our doubts are gone, or that all our fears are relieved.

If that was a requirement of being here, I suspect we would have empty pews.

And I know you would have an empty pulpit.

These confirmands are not here to accept our answers. They are here to join us in our questioning.

They are not here because their journey of faith has ended. They are here because they have found the people they want to journey with.

And they are here so that we can receive their insights, questions, and challenges

Because in our congregational tradition, we believe that God does not just speak to the people in charge, or the people in the robes.

We believe that God might speak to, and through, any one of us.

So we join together to listen to each other, and learn from one another, because we never know through whom the Spirit of God might speak.

And truth is, it is not always one of the 70 people in the tent. Not the ones that we put in charge, or trusted with the task.

We believe, like Moses, that we are better off when all God's people are prophets. When we listen for the possibility that God could be speaking through anyone.

Even someone like Medad or Eldad, just ordinary people out in the camp with everyone else.

So, confirmands. Here we are. This day when you will step forward and take your place as an adult member of this church.

Not because you have finally figured out something we all knew.

But because we need you to help us figure out all that remains a mystery.

So I want to thank you, for stepping forward and saying yes to joining with us in doing the work of love and justice in the world that waits beyond these walls.

Because we need your insights, your stories, your experiences, your wisdom, your humor, your joy, your love.

God has given you these gifts so that you can help this church continue to listen for God's voice, and live out God's call to us to care for all people, to bring justice to life, God's love unmistakable in the world that waits beyond these walls.

I can't wait, because after spending the past 13 weeks with you, I am confident that both our church, and our world, will be better because of the gifts that you bring.

I can't wait, because God's spirit is in you.

And it shows.

