

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” Thus God condemns a corrupt monarchy through the voice of the prophet Jeremiah. The Jewish kingdom, established under David, was meant to stand in sharp contrast to the tyrannical kingdoms and empires that surrounded the people of Israel. David was the shepherd-king, one who served both God and his people. But David’s heirs soon became corrupted and as a result the people suffered, especially the poor.

The American scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann published a book back in 1978 titled *The Prophetic Imagination*. He contrasts what he calls the “royal consciousness” with the “prophetic imagination”. We see these polarities played out in today’s first reading between a corrupt kingship and the prophet Jeremiah. This situation is played out again and again over time and in various cultures. Those in power with vested interests often show an appalling lack of concern for the poor and marginalized.

The role of the prophetic imagination is to challenge the status quo in its complacency and lack of concern. Brueggemann points out three characteristics of the prophetic imagination. First, it names that something is amiss, that things are not according to what God has ordained. Second, the prophetic imagination energizes and engenders hope: things can and should be better. Lastly, the prophet imagination is doxological rather than ideological. That is, it centres on praise of God and not human inspired agenda.

I find these insights helpful in maintaining a spirit of purposefulness in a time when so much in our world appears to be unravelling. More than ever we need the prophetic voice to awaken us to the amazement of God’s loving concern and justice.

***Peace & blessings,  
Gerard***