

## Prophets everywhere

By [Bill Goettler](#)

November 28, 2011

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Goettler's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

As the second Sunday in advent approaches, I find the prophets of the season compelling. To my ears, their message sounds pretty consistent: "Change the ways of this world."

Sometimes I want to pretend that there are no more prophets, that the prophetic word is locked into the biblical era. But then I'm reminded of the guy on my own porch, of the pesky peace activists who insist on gathering on Mondays night in the park downtown, of the little church on the other side of town where parishioners open the doors every single night of the week to combat the gun violence in our city. And I can't help but contrast those responses with my own meager Christmas preparations, with our focus on inspiring worship and special offerings and church order.

There is good reason for all of those things, of course. Faithful worship, generous giving and institutional well-being all matter in the realm of God. But so does the kind of discomfort that John presents us with. To paraphrase the old bumper sticker: If you aren't uncomfortable, you aren't paying attention. A cozy Christmas fails to take the gospel seriously enough. In Advent especially, I feel the need to counter the culture that pretends that all is right with the world.

After all, we know better--as John makes very clear.

The prophets are everywhere, if we will but pay attention. Their call to transformation cannot be ignored. And this, more than any other Sunday, is the week to preach about it.