



SERMON RECAP

AUGUST 9, 2026

The Prophet of Hope: Miss Honey
from “Matilda The Musical”

Isaiah 2:1-4

It is no secret that I love teachers. I was raised by parents who were both public school teachers. My sister's first profession was as a teacher. My wife is a teacher at Rock Island Academy. As I look out into the congregation I can count four active elementary school teachers, one retired, and a few college-level teachers. Perhaps that, above all, is why I love the *Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical*.

It is named after the magical little girl, but to me the heart of the story is Miss Honey, her teacher. At the beginning of the musical we see Matilda as a precocious child with emotionally absent - even abusive - parents and a bullying teacher named Miss Trunchbull. Trunchbull is a hulking, brutish headmistress who hates children and uses extreme punishments to enforce her draconian vision of how a school should operate.

Miss Honey, on the other hand, is a young, idealistic teacher who is very pretty and kind. She leads with humor, melody, and love. She identifies Matilda as a especially gifted and the pair form a special bond. Miss Honey gives Matilda confidence and courage. She speaks a powerful and prophetic word of hope to her and unlocks incredible power within her.

Many have the false idea that being a prophet is some kind of mystical fortune-telling. Or they think that being a prophet is all about preaching doom and gloom and predicting disaster. While there is an element of warning in what a prophet does, and sometimes prophets predict things to come, Biblical prophesy is about telling God's truth.

The prophet Isaiah enters the world in the midst of great cruelty and fear. Much like Matilda, the people of God are surrounded by great and powerful bullies. For Matilda it was her parents and her headmistress. For Israel, it was the global superpowers Assyria and Egypt. Stuck in between these forces of dominance, the people of Israel suffer.

The leaders and elite have allowed the people to suffer. The opening chapter of Isaiah sets the stage: Israel has abandoned God and God's way. “They have abandoned the LORD, despised the holy one of Israel; they turned their backs on God” (Isaiah 1:4) How do we know this? What has happened?

“Your princes are rebels, companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and pursues gifts. They don't defend the orphan, and the widow's cause never reaches them” (Isaiah 1:23).

Yes, Isaiah brings a word of doom and destruction, but it is a warning of what is going to come if things don't change. There is a day of reckoning for evil ways coming, but there is also a reminder that the people's home is in and with God.



“Matilda the Musical,” created by Dennis Kelly and Tim Minchin, premiered in 2010 and won seven Tony Awards — including Best Book of a Musical and Best Featured Actor. Based on Roald Dahl's 1988 novel — later adapted into the beloved 1996 film — the show has become one of the most celebrated modern musicals.

This is why I am starting this series with Miss Honey, the Prophet of Hope. Both she and Isaiah begin their stories surrounded by cruelty and despair. Miss Honey however, stands tall in her gratitude for what she has. She sings a beautiful song, “My House,” where she extols the virtue of her humble surroundings. “It may not be much but it's enough for me,” she sings. From the moment she sings this song, the story turns. Matilda is empowered and the two pair set out to right the incredible wrongs that have been inflicted on them.

Isaiah also sings a song about home in the midst of despair. **“the LORD's house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it... Then they will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war” (Isaiah 2:1, 4)**

Isaiah knows that things are bleak, but that there is a promise to come. The LORD's house will be a place of peace and plenty. It might not be much, but it will be enough for all. That is the power that prophets can wield. Yes, they see the brokenness of the world and warn people of what is to come. What is more important, however, is that they see the truth of the promise of hope. Miss Honey saw Matilda's power. Isaiah saw Israel's power.

In the musical, Miss Honey and Matilda are able to overcome the meanness, the bullies, and the injustice because Miss Honey's prophetic voice helps Matilda find her incredible power. That is our role in all of this - to be the prophetic voice. We are to call upon people to find their incredible power, to invite people to the LORD's house where there is enough for all. We are to be the prophets of hope to a dismal world. To those who are bullied and exploited, we can be the Miss Honey, speaking truth with love, kindness, and a melody.

NEXT WEEK:

The Prophet of Imagination: Don Quixote from The Man of La Mancha