



## Prophets and Seers: Being a digital prophet.

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When thinking about the theme of today, I kept being drawn back to the notion of prophecy and what it means for my voice to be prophetic. This is a daunting notion, because I have always been uneasy with my voice: labourious, awkward and tiring. Making my voice heard has always been difficult.

So I have had to find my own ways of making myself heard. And in recent years that has come through my mobile phone. Twitter had a hashtag a few months ago #twitterin5words. I had no doubt what I would say: **Helped me find my voice.**

Tweeting has major parallels to my life with a disability in that it places limits on me from the very beginning. I have hypermobility syndrome: a condition that causes major pain and fatigue. A condition which is also never the same two days running. One day I can be at work or socialising with friends, the next day I am in bed all day. So I have to plan very carefully: I have to get through my days and weeks with limited energy and the knowledge that certain activities will cause my pain to flare up. There are constraints placed on me before I begin.

Which is the same with the little box on the screen on Twitter: I have 140 characters to say what I need to. I have to pick and choose very carefully what I am going to say and how I am going to say it. Just as I have become a master at editing my life in terms of day-to-day living, I have taken those skills to twitter - finding new ways of saving space, reframing words as I would rearrange my day and rethink my activities. Which appointment is more important today?

Which word is more relevant to the story I am trying to tell? Words, like energy, become precious. Something to be savoured.

Twitter has taught me is how to use limitation as strength. But, actually is that really accurate? Could it be that my disability is the very reason why I can communicate so well on Twitter?

Because, when I think about it, I see my disability as providing the unique conditions for my prophetic voice. I cannot write. People would scoff and tell me not to be so down on myself. But that is a physical reality. Holding a pen is hard, making the marks upon the page is an excruciatingly slow and painful process. So I learnt from a very young age to say everything I needed to say in the fewest possible words. I am economical with words: I use them sparingly, with precision and caution. I think this is why I tweet. A writer friend of my said recently that he was considering leaving twitter because 140 characters was just not enough. For him, twitter was damaging his love of words: it was too constrictive. But twitter has had the opposite effect on me: it's deepened my love for words. Every character matters, never mind every word. You don't have to have a disregard for language and grammar to be a good tweeter: rather you need to develop a reverence for words.

And my message? What is that? I find it really hard to say, because it sounds like such a grand claim. So I looked at my bio on twitter - equally restrained by character limit.

*Often wobbly. Frequently achey. Usually smiley.*

There we have the holy trinity of my existence: Wobbly, achey, smiley. Living in this bendy, painful body and yet somehow trying to find the funny side. Twitter has been the ideal place for me to live that out.

When joking isn't possible, twitter plays an important role in offering me space for **lamentation**. Life is hard. I have good days and I have awful days. And naming that difficulty

has been a process that I have been able to do on twitter. It has been a safe space where I could be honest about my struggles. In fact someone once told me that they learnt more about me in a month of reading my tweets than in a whole weekend away with me.

Twitter has provided me with a vital **community of similar prophets** who I can share my life with, especially on those harder days. Even at my lowest point, emotionally and physically, I can usually tweet *something* and usually someone responds, with prayer, with encouragement or just with a silly cat picture. Twitter has done a lot to combat the isolation that living with long-term pain and fatigue can cause.

On days when I cannot be in physical fellowship with others, Twitter becomes my church: my **place of prayer**, even.

Twitter is where I find my **prophetic voice**: mainly because it is where I find the voice I am most comfortable with. I've looked through the Bible at the prophets, each one with their flaws and with their strengths. Each one with their unique telling of the message they had been given. Many, like the runaway Jonah, took a while to settle into their voice. I have tried to run away from my voice at times, because it has felt like it didn't fit, but have found that place on twitter where I can get my message across. I have been met with a community of similar prophets, with whom I can share my experience of life and all its challenges.

So I have been called to communication - which terrifies me at times. I have always maintained that I have poor communication skills, mainly because talking is an effort and holding a pen is nearly impossible. But what I am slowly realising is that I am called to a different kind of communication. Which I think is true for most of us prophets who find ourselves calling from the edge. We have to find new and creative ways of communicating. And when I read the Bible, I

am encouraged that this is the path faced by many of the prophets and seers of old. Always challenging convention, they were constantly finding new ways of reframing their message. Moses had tablets of stone, my tablet is a bit different but still vital and unique to my message.

Finding the exact way to phrase something in the simplest possible way is a skill I have had to develop from a very young age as a direct result of my disability. It's how I kept up at school - stripping it down, saying a lot with a little. This means that as a form of communication Twitter is ideal for me. As in my everyday life I am set a limit before I even begin to construct the sentence. And working within those parameters has helped me to perfect the art of making every character matter.