



St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben July 31, 2025



From the Rector

In the early 1990s, Shari and I sang with the Paris Choral Society. Located at the American Cathedral, the Choral Society performed major works in an amazing venue with some of the world's best soloists. One year, someone in the audience was so impressed by our performance of Handel's *Messiah* that he invited

the chorus to go on tour in Greece, with concerts in Athens and the resort town of Nafplion, as well as on Greek National TV. There are lots of great stories from that adventure. The most lasting gift is that more than 30 years later I still know the entire *Messiah* by heart.

The *Messiah* is important not just for its music but for its libretto, the words which are sung. Put together by Charles Jennens, the libretto for the *Messiah* represents the compilation Biblical texts which tell the story of Jesus, 60 percent of which come from the Old Testament/Hebrew Scripture prophecies which Christians have traditionally seen as telling of the coming of Christ. Though Jennens put them together in the early 1700s, they remain foundational to Christianity today.

Is there, however, only one way to look at these texts? Could the suffering Servant also be referring to the Jewish people as a whole? Is Mary the only person who Isaiah is talking about when he says a young woman who will bear a child? Could "Anointed One" which is translated as "Messiah" refer to other people as well as Jesus – even to you and me? What is prophecy about in the first place? Is a prophet's role to predict the future or critique the present? History, it is said, is written by the victor or at least by the dominant culture. That doesn't mean that can't be alternative points of view. Sometimes truth works on many levels. Sometimes the answer is "both/and."