

Christ Came as God's Prophet to Us
Wednesday, December 14, 2005
Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
Pastor Karl Walther

The Scriptures say: *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

God's Word to us today will complete this Advent's consideration of Christ's coming as our King, our Priest, and our Prophet. This is Deuteronomy chapter eighteen, verses fifteen through twenty. Here Moses, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, promises the following:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."

"If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Introduction: People Have a Need to Grasp God

Dear fellow Christians—for whom Christ came as Prophet:

Most people the world over would acknowledge that they have a deep need to be on the friendly side of God, or the gods.... How else can we explain that at least five billion, out of the world's six billion people or so, claim allegiance to some sort of deity or deities?

I'll go further, though. Most people the world over would agree that they have a craving to experience the divine in some way: to see or to hear or to touch – to understand! –God.... How else would we explain the gods they have come up with?

I mean, in ancient times: the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and others developed gods that they could understand. You can see the sun; so, they developed a sun god. You can experience war; so, there was the god of war. You depended on the crops; so, there were gods who helped them grow. In fact, that's another thing: people developed gods according to their needs.

And it's no different in modern times. The Hindus still have hundreds of millions of gods. Although the Buddhists sort of have it narrowed down to one, and the Muslims certainly do, these still don't satisfy. They're vague gods or remote gods whom we must please with our actions.

Theme: Christ Came as God's Prophet to Us

So, the fact remains: people have a need to experience a friendly god, but they somehow cannot come up with an entirely suitable deity. But the true God, our God, knows that. That's why we're considering today that: CHRIST CAME AS GOD'S PROPHET TO US—so that we could experience God's friendly presence....

Part One: We Needed Christ

God's words to us today, like those of the past two weeks, come to us from the mouth of Moses in middle chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy. He's across the Jordan River from Jericho, and it's spring of the year fourteen hundred six BC. Moses is reviewing for a whole new generation of Israelites, just before they enter the Promised Land, God's official agreement with them. And it's an official agreement that includes the Holy Spirit's anointing of kings, priests, and prophets.

Speaking of prophets, Moses now says—and this is God's Word to us today: ***The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.***

Now, the parents of the people in front of him had not listened to Moses well. And the folks in front of Moses would face a severe temptation from their sinful flesh not to listen to this new prophet either. So, Moses encourages them by reminding them that God was actually acting according to their specific request: ***This is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly.*** That was two hundred fifty miles south of here and forty years earlier than this. It was when Israel had said: ***"Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."***

Do you remember the story? – God, the true God, had chosen to reveal himself to the Israelites in an effort to reveal himself to all people in the world. And so, he had the Israelites meet him at Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai. And what happened there?

Well, back in Exodus chapters nineteen and twenty we read: *Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.... Later: When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

See, that's the way it is.... People have a craving to experience God. But they don't realize what a frightful, terrifying thing that is! When we meet God, we're turned inside out. All the ground-in dirt, all the stinking stench of our all sins—it's laid bare for every eye to see. But it's the penetrating perception of God himself that's most terrifying. The splendor of his holiness reveals the rebellion of our souls, our inborn hatred toward God, and the demons' control of our very spirit. And we shake for fear from the experience of meeting him!

Part Two: We Got Christ

No wonder we cry out! "Don't speak to us, O Lord! Send somebody else! Send somebody we can stand!" And the Lord replies. ***The LORD said to Moses: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet.*** And of course, a prophet's job is to be an intermediary—somebody standing between God and people to relay God's message to them.

God continues: This prophet, Moses, will be *like you*. And the Bible tells us that the outstanding element of Moses' prophetic office was that God spoke to him face-to-face like a friend. So, God would speak face-to-face with this new prophet, like a friend.

This prophet, Moses, will arise *from among their brothers*. He'll be an Israelite. And arising from among their brothers like that, he could not be terrifying to them at all.

Finally: *I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.*" That's a prophet's job: revealing God's message to God's people. And this prophet would reveal to people everything about God.

Yep, that's the kind of help God's people needed, in order to experience the friendly face of God. That's the kind of help we needed. So, has this kind of prophet come along yet? ...Yes, absolutely! In fact, Acts chapter three states it unreservedly. This prophet: friendly to God, from among the Israelites, revealing everything about the Lord—this Prophet is Jesus Christ.

In fact: not only did Jesus speak the Word of God unerringly, like any true prophet, Jesus was the Word of God, like no other prophet. Jesus revealed God: not only in everything he said, but also in everything he did—because Jesus is himself God!

And so, you and I come face to face with this fact: God loved you – God cherished your soul – so very much that he came to this world in human form to reveal himself to you! God – the almighty and everlasting Lord, who existed in perfect bliss in the glory of godliness eternally before time began – that God so caringly craved to be your friend that became a baby and then a man and always a Savior for you!

So, my friend: Do you want to know whether God hears your prayers? – Take a look at the little ears of Baby Jesus! Yes, God hears your cry for mercy! ...Do you want to know if God sees your needs or no? – Take a look at the tiny eyes of Baby Jesus! Yes, God sees your needs and meets them! ...Do you want to know if God has any comforting words to speak to you? – Take a look at the miniature mouth of Baby Jesus! Yes, God has spoken to you!

...Do you want to know if God hurries to help you, longs to embrace you, if the heart of God your Sovereign bleeds for you? – Take a look at the little legs of Jesus, his tiny arms, listen to his soft heartbeat – and then consider: these feet were pierced for you and these hands were nailed for you, and this beating heart stopped silent for you.... My friend: There is nothing God won't do for you!

So, even if you're stressed, even if you're sad, even if you're suffering, God really cares for you! His personal Prophet to you – the Baby Jesus Christ – is all the proof you'll ever need.

Part Three: We've Still Got Christ

And the applications are perfectly clear, aren't they? First: *"If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."* I mean, how in the world could God do otherwise?

So, it means we need to listen to the words that Jesus has spoken in God's name! And how do we do that? Well, Jesus doesn't speak to us on TV—except, of course, during our broadcasts, weekly and more often, on Cable Thirteen. And Jesus doesn't speak to us in the newspaper—except in a few short spots, each day, in the local edition. And Jesus doesn't generally speak to us when we're having fun with our friends.

No, Jesus speaks to us in the Scriptures and in the Sacraments. So, isn't it time you start using them diligently? Isn't it time you receive Lord's Supper regularly? Isn't it time you start studying the Scriptures daily? My friend: Jesus wants to talk to you!

And the other application? *“A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.”* And how could God do differently from that?

So, obviously this means that modern-day prophets need to speak in the name of the true God only what he has given them to say! ...And who are the modern-day prophets? Us pastors? Well, yes. And think of the holy responsibility we have: not only for us to make sure we say nothing beyond or contrary to what God has said, but also for you not to hear or believe anything of the sort! ...But again: who are the modern-day prophets? Also you? Yes, also you. You are the “Bible” many people first read. So, you need to expose their sins. You need to reveal their Savior. You need to speak the words of the Scriptures. And my friend, you need to live them, too.

Conclusion: Through the Baby Jesus, God Has Grasped People

So, it's obvious the world over.... People need to grasp God. But in Jesus Christ, God has grasped people. He's the Prophet we needed. He's the Prophet we got, back at the very first Christmas-time. And Jesus is still the prophet we need and have. Let's always listen to him! And let's never grow tired of living for him! Amen.

The Scriptures say: *Look, Christ is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*