

The Fourth Sunday After The Epiphany

February 1, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

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." (NIV)

"Daddy?" His father opened his eyes and immediately looked at the clock in his bedroom that read 3:44. That would be a.m. "Yeah, son." "I need to go to the bathroom." The house had just been remodeled that day and the bathroom was now at the end of a long hallway. For a four year old boy, in the middle of the night, the new hallway looks five miles long with multitude side rooms where giants are waiting to jump out at little kids who are out of their beds. So a scared little boy begs: "Daddy, please come with me." "Okay," says dad. Dad crawls out of bed, grabs his little boy's hand, and leads him down the new hallway to the bathroom. He guides this boy in the way he had never been before.

Wouldn't that be great to have all your life? Would we like someone to guide us in the ways we have never been before? Maybe you're terrified at the thought of bringing home a new child or of the financial setback you've just had. Perhaps you are wondering how you will cope with old age, or some disease or heart ailment. Maybe starting a new school or job has your stomach in knots. Whatever your hallway may be, you mutter under your breath, "I've never been this way before." Do you want someone who loves you & that you can trust to guide and lead you and show you the way?

If so, dear friends, the Lord has heard and answered your prayer. He sends someone to guide you. He sends someone to lead you. He sends someone to speak to you. As God did for Israel so the Lord does for you and me. He does not leave us to walk down the dark halls of life alone. Listen to His Word today as God reveals - **A prophet for the people. A prophet like Moses. A prophet even better than Moses.**

The Lord God gracious provided the people with just such a loving leader in Moses who lead them out of their slavery in Egypt. The Lord used Moses to guide them through the desert and bring them to the brink of the land He had promised. But Moses would now be leaving them. Moses would not be going with them. The Lord warns them before they enter this new land about looking for guidance and answers in the wrong places. He says don't look to sorcerers or spiritists or mediums or to those who cast spells or practice divination or consult the dead. Those things are detestable to the Lord who wants to lead his people. Instead, Moses writes: "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers.**"

Their faithful God promises them a prophet who will be like Moses. What a gift! Like Moses this prophet will be a true Israelite. What was Moses like as a prophet? He was a shepherd of sheep who became a shepherd of God's people. He loved & cared for the people. He faithfully fed the people with God's Word. The book of Hebrews say: ***"Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future."***(3) As God's spokesman, Moses told the people what God said. He did not tell them what he thought God would want or hide what God said when it wasn't popular. He was God's messenger through and through. He heeded God's warning. ***"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."***

Moses also had another role. He mentions it here. ***"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."*** Remember how the Israelites trembled in fear and stayed at a distance when God spoke at Mt. Sinai & they saw the smoke and lightning and heard the thunder and trumpets. They said to Moses: ***"Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*** This is exactly what the Lord did. He made Moses a mediator, a go-between. Moses received God's commands and brought them to the people. Moses prayed & interceded for the people. Moses walked with God and talked with God. In the book of Numbers the Lord describes His special relationship with Moses: ***"When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD."*** (Numbers 12)

What a blessing Moses was to Israel as he cared for them, lead them through some dark days, and spoke God's Word which guided them in all their ways. He was a prophet for the people. But now God reveals to us another prophet for the people. This prophet is not just like Moses, but even better than Moses. What a bold statement! No wonder New Testament believers were looking for this prophet. The Lord God promised: ***"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."***

This is the prophet that you and I know by name for: ***"in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."*** I could read off New Testament passages that reveal Christ as this One anointed to serve as our prophet. Jesus is the prophet God raised up to lead and guide us and His Words send devils reeling. He speaks with authority. He speaks not just for God. He speaks as God. He is the good Shepherd. He intercedes for us. Jesus loves us and cares for us and protects us & speaks words that will guide us down any dark halls of life. Jesus will lead us on the way to places we have never been before. He wants to teach us everything He has commanded.

But there is something else that makes Jesus even better than Moses, yes much better. Moses could just point the people to God's laws and promises. Jesus is not just a prophet, Jesus is the promise! Jesus is the answer and the solution to all that we need. As John says in His Gospel: ***"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*** The answer for our lack of holiness is Jesus and His perfect life for us. The solution to our sins is Jesus and His suffering and death on the

cross for us. The answer to why we have comfort in facing death is Jesus who took the sting of death away by coming out of His tomb for us. The way to heaven is Jesus. He is the truth and the life.

God sent Jesus as our prophet and as more than a prophet because He wants all people to be saved. ***“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”*** (1 Timothy 2) Now, because of our mediator, we have been brought into a relationship with a holy God that is not based on fear & trembling. Now, because of our mediator, we can go to God at any time and talk to Him about anything, just like a little boy might approach his own father who loves him. Now, because of our mediator, we will be able to see God and not die. Now we look forward to living with God forever.

I have been made a prophet of this good news. I get to love and comfort and lead and guide and show the way for God’s precious people. I get to speak for God. I pray that you know that I take this responsibility seriously. When I say this is what the Lord God says, I know there’s not anything more important than to make sure it is what God has said. That is the job of any prophet. A prophet is to be faithful to God’s message - to all of it. That’s why you keep coming to listen. You are not here so that you can hear my latest ideas or philosophies on life. You are here so God can speak to you. You are here to listen to the prophet for the people, not to me, but to the prophet God raised up for you. You are here because God says: ***“You must listen to him,”*** and ***“If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”***

Where do we turn when our stomach is in knots, when the path looks dark and uncertain, when we are going a way we have never been before? Should we turn to human helpers? Should we muster up our own strength and resolve to get through it? Should we consult a psychic or look at our horoscope? Those things are an abomination.

Why would we turn anywhere else but to Jesus? Jesus is a prophet for the people, all people. He speaks words of love. He speaks words of forgiveness for all our sins, even for our abominations. Jesus points us to the cross and says all the guilt that you have for not trusting in God like you should was nailed to me there. Our guilt remains buried in the ground, but Jesus does not. Jesus is the prophet for you and me. Listen to Him. Listen to your God and trust in Him forsaking all who speak words that are different than this living Word. Listen because Jesus loves you and wants to protect, and lead, and guide you through this life. Jesus wants to take you by the hand all the way to the place you have never been before - to your glorious home in paradise forever. Amen.