

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 1, 2015
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)

In one of my favorite movies of all time Tom Cruise emphatically declares: *"I want the truth!"* My friends, do we ever feel this way? Do you just want the truth? It would be nice if all politicians just gave us the facts and spoke truthfully about their agendas and what they want for our country. *"I want the truth!"* It would great if all our family, friends, and co-workers were always honest with us. You could trust everything they say to you and never worry about them going behind your back. We would never have to feel the hurt of their deception and lies. *"I want the truth!"* Isn't this also the case in the visible church here on earth? How awesome it would be if we could listen to every preacher of God's Word and know that without a doubt every word that comes out of their mouth is true! *"I want the truth!"*

Yet, you and I both understand that what we get is often just the opposite of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Politicians have been trained to tell people what they want to hear. Even closest of family members and friends hurt us with lies. Co-workers will deceive to gain an advantage over us. And it is more important than ever to be like the Bereans and check what preachers of God's Word are saying to see if it really is God's Word! All too often we hear lies, twisted truths or half truths, and falsehoods of every kind. It might lead us to emphatically declare: *"I want the truth!"* Thank God that He gives it to us! This is why God sends us His prophets – to speak to us the truth – His truth. So rejoice and thank the Lord this morning that we have: **A Prophet for the people who speaks in truth. 1) One like Moses. 2) One even better than Moses.**

Deuteronomy is much like a farewell speech Moses gives to God's people Israel. Moses is about to die. Before Moses leaves them he encourages them to listen to and obey all the words of the Lord that he spoke to them. He warns them before they enter this new land about looking for guidance, answers, and the truth 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. Moses gave them God's warning about listening to false prophets. *"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."*

Why should the people listen to Moses? Because Moses is a prophet of God! 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. We read in the book of Hebrews today: "**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 spoke for the people in truth!

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)

Now do you see why Moses was so respected by the people of Israel? Do you understand why the Jews hold up Moses in such high regard? God used Moses to give them His law. God used Moses to speak the truth to them. Moses in every way was God's great prophet. Now we read twice in our text: "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers.**" Another prophet like Moses would be awesome! He will be one of their own brothers, an Israelite. He will be a prophet for the people who speaks in truth. He will be faithful like Moses. And this prophet will be even better than Moses! God says: "**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.**" This is why Moses commands: "**You must listen to him.**" No wonder New Testament believers were looking for this prophet!

Who is this prophet for the people who speaks in truth? Just a few weeks ago at His baptism we heard God say: "**This is my Son whom I love; with whom I am well pleased. Listen to 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.**" This is the Prophet whose powerful Word sends 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. He always, always speaks to us in truth. This prophet, of course, is Jesus!

I would like to say that I always listen to Him. I would like to say you always listen to Him. But that would be true no more than if I said the people of Israel always listened to the words of Moses. If you know your Old Testament history such a statement is laughable. Too often we ignore the truth. Other times we can't handle the truth so we want to change the truth when it doesn't suit us. We would rather have preachers tell us what our itching ears want to hear. We would rather water down the truth or hide the truth. For such sins we deserve punishment, and death, and hell.

But there is something else that makes Jesus even better than Moses, yes much better. John writes: ***“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*** Paul writes: ***“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) Because Jesus didn't just speak God Word to us but actually obeyed it – we have holiness. Because Jesus didn't just speak about forgiveness but actually went to the cross where He suffered and died to pay for sin – we have forgiveness. Because Jesus didn't just say He is the Resurrection and the Life but actually came out of His grave again – we have life and heaven. So when Jesus says, *“Take heart, children, your sins are forgiven,”* you and I are able to know beyond a doubt that His word is true. When Jesus promises that He is preparing a place for us and will come back to take us to be where He is – we know that Jesus is not lying but speaking to us again in truth.

“I want the truth!” Every time I listen to Jesus I have it. *“You want the truth!”* Open up God's Word and that is what you will find – the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Jesus once again leaves us a perfect example of being a prophet. Jesus is the Prophet! A prophet speaks God's Word. Isn't this what God has made me as I stand here today? I have been made a prophet of this good news. I get to speak for God. I pray that you know that I take this responsibility very seriously. The words of one of my professors still sticks with me when he said if you are going to get up in a pulpit and say *“this is what God says, then you better be extremely careful and cautious that what you are saying is what God says!”* That is the job of any prophet. A prophet is to be faithful to God's message - to all of it. I pray all the men who will stand up here in a few minutes will agree. Of all the things Amazing Grace could be known for, what could be better than to be a place for the people where they hear the truth – God's truth? The truth is we have Jesus, a prophet even better than Moses, but even more than that Jesus is our Savior! This is the truth that sets us free! Amen.