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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Epiphany 4

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

GOD'S PROPHET FOR HIS PEOPLE

In His role as the Christ, Jesus fills three God-ordained functions to save us. He was sent by God to be Prophet, Priest and King for God's people. Today we will focus on Christ's role as God's Prophet for His People. We'll do this on the basis of the first Scripture reading today from Deuteronomy chapter 18.

If we were part of the culture in Jerusalem in Jesus' time, we would understand that the prophet Moses was religiously a big, big deal – as big as George Washington is to the founding of America. Moses lived some 1500 years before Christ. It was Moses whom God used to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. It was Moses whom God used to part the Red Sea and lead the Israelites through it to safety. It was Moses to whom God gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai establishing God's covenant relationship with the Israelites. It was through Moses that their whole complex system of worship and sacrifices was set up. It was Moses who led the Israelites for 40 years through the desert wilderness until they reached the Promised Land of Canaan. And Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible – the first five books which became the foundation and litmus test for all the rest of Scripture.

God Himself had said to the Israelites concerning Moses, *When there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them 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.* Moses was distinguished as God's prophet to the people.

Imagine if God had not sent Moses to the Israelites. God's purpose was to preserve the Israelites as a people because they would be the cradle of the Messiah, the nursery of the Savior of the world. But if Moses had not been there, they would have remained shackled in Egypt under the religious domination of Egyptian sorcerers, magicians and practitioners of the dark arts there. Without Moses they all may have been misled and swallowed up by Korah's rebellious attitude toward the Lord. Without Moses, they may have fallen prey to the curses of Balaam or the sensual enticements of the idolatry of Moab. Without Moses perhaps the whole nation would have been wiped out by entering the Promised Land prematurely as happened to some of them.

Moses was God's spokesman, God's prophet, to the people of Israel. But as God's prophet Moses foretold a much greater Prophet for God's people. Here in Deuteronomy chapter 18 while giving a farewell sermon Moses declared: *The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.*

This Prophet anticipated through Moses is Jesus. The New Testament all throughout establishes Jesus as the Prophet Moses pointed to. Peter quoted this exact statement from Moses as referring to Jesus. The people who saw and heard Jesus regularly discussed among themselves if Jesus might be “the Prophet.” The book of Hebrews says, *Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.*

Moses was a prophet for God’s people. Jesus is THE Prophet for God’s people. As such, there are points of comparison between them. For one, both served as a go-between, a mediator, between God and His people. When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, the entire mountain was engulfed in flame and smoke like a volcano that billowed to the stratosphere. The ground shook. The trumpet of God blasted louder and louder. The people were terrified and Moses recounted to them what happened next: *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 fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.*

Jesus is that Prophet. He not only speaks the words of God like Moses, He *is* the Word of God. Moses was only a man, but Jesus is God in the flesh. God meets us in the person of Jesus. In fact, He approaches us in no other way than in the person of Jesus. Jesus is God’s ultimate Prophet for His People. Thus He speaks with the authority of God. The Bible says, *The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* Jesus once said, *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

This is where the naturally defiant human heart rears its ugly head against God. The holy and all-powerful God owes us nothing and yet has provided for us access to Him as the only source of truth and a way of salvation at no cost to us, at a cost only to Himself – and the natural human inclination is to find fault with it. “Only through Jesus? Isn’t that kind of exclusive? Surely there must be other ways to God that are just as legitimate. There can’t be only one way of salvation or one source of truth.” What about those poor people in China, we say.

Even in an everyday seemingly more benign way – we all have internet; we all have YouTube and podcasts. Don’t we tend to become experts in just about any topic or information source *other* than what Jesus says? We can learn how to switch out a toilet, understand what causes an economy to recover, learn how to set healthy boundaries in our relationships... but we remain largely ignorant of what Jesus says, don’t we? And for all our striving and learning, life remains as difficult a struggle as ever and we never find the peace we were looking for.

Under Moses, God threatened the punishment of death of any false prophet who would presume to mislead the people. He did not want His special covenant relationship with them to be broken. Similarly, God calls on us today to have a change of approach, a change of heart

toward Jesus. He wants us to have that special relationship of faith in Jesus so that we can have the sure salvation Jesus presents.

Jesus did something for us that Moses could not do. Moses set up a system of animal sacrifices for Jewish worship, sacrifices that were really only symbolic. Jesus sacrificed Himself on a cross in order to atone to God for our naturally defiant hearts. He did this to reconcile us to God so that God would no longer hold our sins against us and we and God would no longer be at odds with each other. God invites all people, He invites you, to trust in Jesus – to rely on His crucifixion to give you peace with God. Because of Jesus' death on the cross you are forgiven. God is not holding anything against you at all. His only will and desire is to bless and save you.

In connection with Jesus, God's intentions toward you are only good. Jesus, the very Prophet of God, once said, *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.* A life of peace with God and service to Him is the original purpose for which we were created and thus the ultimate fulfillment for our lives.

This is why God's desire is that we give our full attention to Jesus, that we look for no other source of truth or way of salvation than Jesus. For Jesus is God's Prophet for His People.