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St. John's Lutheran Church – Kimball, NE
Advent I – Midweek (dual parish service with Immanuel, Burns, WY)
December 2, 2015
Text: Deuteronomy 18:9–22; John 1:19–34

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus, prophet, priest, and king. Those three divine offices in which our Lord fulfilled will guide us through this Advent season. Today, we consider the office of prophet. Before we get too far into things, however, it would be good for us to define what a prophet is and what he does. To begin with, a prophet is a man called by God to proclaim the divine word revealed to the prophet by the Lord for the needs of God's people in the present and, at times, for the future.

I am not a prophet. My ministry is to proclaim the word of the Lord that has been recorded in Holy Scripture. I do not receive any direct revelations from the Lord. That is not my vocation. And I must hasten to add, that the office of prophet is a NT gift but it is rare indeed. There are at least two reasons why: 1) Jesus fulfilled it and 2) we now have the entirety of God's revealed word in the Bible. There is no need for any further revelations now that Jesus has come and we have the complete record of God's dealings with people in the Bible.

The standards of prophetic ministry are laid out in Deuteronomy 18:9–22. In these passages we learn how a prophet is to be judged and who fulfills it perfectly. We began this reading from Deuteronomy 18 with Moses' warnings about the abominable practices of the inhabitant of Canaan. They practiced divination, fortune telling, reading omens, sorcery, necromancy, and various forms of consultation with the dead. And forgive me for being blunt, but they practiced a form of idolatry which required that children be offered as burnt offerings to idols of wood and stone. That was the kind of worship life and culture one found in Canaan before the children of Israel conquered it.

God's people were not to listen to or practice such things. They were an abomination to the Lord. Instead, they were to listen and wait for a Prophet who would proclaim God's true word. This final, complete, and perfect Prophet would be the consummation of God's revelation to the world. Listen to how Moses describes this prophet in Deut. 18:15–19:

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (*similar to Moses but greater than Moses*) from among you, from your brothers (*from the children of Israel*)—it is to him you shall listen— ... ¹⁷And the LORD said to me, ‘... ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Notice some very important things here: this prophet will speak all that God the Father places in His mouth. And God’s people are to listen to Him, first and foremost. “To him you shall listen” says Moses. We hear a similar phrase spoken about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, both OT prophets, appeared with Jesus in glory. Peter wants to make tabernacles for each, thus placing them all on the same level of authority and importance. God the Father interrupts and says, “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.” At that moment, only Jesus remained. He is the prophet that all other prophets pointed to. They must submit to Jesus’ final word. He’s *THE* Prophet promised in Deut. 18. All the Father wants us to know will come from this Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ.

For centuries, God’s OT people looked for and longed for this greatest of all prophets. Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all those OT prophets we read about in the Bible were great men of faith. They were used mightily by God. But they were not *THE* Prophet. So God’s people waited and prayed for His coming.

About 1,500 years after Deut. 18 and the death of Moses, 1st century Israel was still waiting for the prophet like Moses into whose mouth the Lord would place His words. John the Baptist began preaching in the desert and baptizing God’s people in the Jordan River unto repentance. Priests and Levites from Jerusalem went to John and asked him point blank who he was. I am not the Christ, said John. Well, are you the prophet Elijah? No. Are you the Prophet? There’s the question! Are you *THE* prophet of Deut. 18? No.

The Jewish leaders are naturally confused and maybe even a bit irritated. “Then why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John’s answer to that important question is quite intriguing. “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

It's almost as if John is saying, "He's among you, *that* Prophet you're looking for. He here; and He's far superior to me. Just wait. He'll reveal Himself soon enough. And then you'll know how far greater He is to me and all prophets who have ever come!"

And wouldn't you know it. As if on cue... "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'"

Wow! Moses never did that! Take away the sins of the world. Only Jesus, a prophet like Moses but who is greater than all prophets can do that. Yes, Jesus is *THE* prophet promised in Deut. 18. But He's also much more. John tells us, "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Jesus, God's only begotten Son, did all the things that prophets do. He preached His Father's word with authority that amazed the crowds. And He predicted the future. He declared that Jerusalem would be destroyed. About 37 years after His resurrection, Jerusalem was destroyed, in 70 A.D. And Jesus made other predictions too. He said He would rise from the dead after three days. And He did. He told the disciples He would depart back to the Father. He did. And He said that He would come again in glory with His Father's angels in order to raise all the dead. He said that He would sit on His Father's throne and judge all humanity in righteousness. We are waiting for the fulfillment of those two promises.

All that Jesus preached was according to His Father's will; the Father's Word was in His mouth. Every prediction Jesus made come to pass with the exception of His return on the Last Day to judge the living and the dead. Moses told us in Deut 18 that the truthfulness of a prophet must be judged by whether or not His preaching came true. Our Lord's record is spotless and perfect. We have confidence that the predictions about Jesus' return will come true because: 1) He is *THE* prophet of Deut 18 and 2) all His past predictions came true. Jesus is coming again. And that's great news for us believers.

Until then however, Jesus' prophetic preaching needs to be heard all the more. For Jesus proclaims that all your sins and iniquities, all your mistakes and failure, everything that brings you shame and embarrassment, all of it, it forgiven and cleansed by His blood shed on Calvary's cross. He proclaims that you are His dear children. And that's the kind of prophetic preaching that will sustain us in our most holy faith until Jesus comes again. Jesus, *THE* prophet, our great Prophet of salvation.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.