

December 10, 2017

“Jesus: A Prophet Like Moses”
Deuteronomy 18:15

FCF: Longing to know the will of God

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus is the long-awaited Great Prophet.
(magnet) And, as such, we must give Him our ears and heed Him.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We don't lack for news and ways to get it. What we lack is news we can trust. In 1999, C. John Sommerville published a book that is as worth reading now as it was then - How the News Makes Us Dumb. His premise is that news agencies - every one of them - are businesses. They exist to make money. So most will pander to our basest impulses. But that doesn't take away our desire to be informed, to know and understand. That's a laudable, God-given impulse.

As is the longing to know God and His purposes for our lives. We were made to know Him, for relationship with Him. And so that longing is deeply engrained. The good news is that He has sought us out. And that's part of what Christmas is – God revealing Himself to man.

SCRIPTURE READING: Deuteronomy 18:9-22

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Because of Creation, we are hard-wired to know God and His ways. But, because of the Fall, those longings have gone awry. We are instruments in need of tuning, compasses in need of calibration. Our internal GPS is in dire need of repair. Every aspect of our humanity has been bent and broken, stained and scarred – including our minds, our thoughts and understanding.

So we blindly search with a limp. Down one road, we have horoscopes and psychic hotlines. Down the other, we have the claims of naturalistic science. Both are sorely lacking.

But God would not have His people left in the dark. Which brings us to the prophets - chosen by God to speak on His behalf. They foretold what was to come and they forth-told what was meant to be. They said, “*Thus says the Lord*” for He really had. Such were the prophets.

In our text, Moses is speaking of a line of prophets to come. But he clearly had in mind one prophet in particular. This would be the Prophet, the Messiah, the Christ - like Moses but greater than Moses, as a prophet but more than a prophet. He has come. And His name is Jesus.

How should we respond to such a Prophet? Given who He is and all He has shown Himself to be, we must give Him our ears and heed Him. Looking to Him, longing to hear and heed Him. Especially in view of His prophetic ministry - its manner, message, and means.

I. THE MANNER OF THIS PROPHET

First, the manner of this prophet's ministry - the weightiness of how He speaks.

A) Expected

In some respects, Jesus was just as people would have expected. He taught.

1. All other teachers

And certainly the people were used to being taught – both in the past and in the present.

2. This teacher

Even some of His opponents gave Him a level of respect, often referring to Him as “Rabbi.”

B) Unexpected

So, the fact He taught was expected. But consider what He taught. And how.

1. All other teachers

Not even the best of teachers were immortal. Their messages were second hand, passed on from God through them. And worse, some were second rate. To say nothing of the heresy of the false prophets. And so, as hope and promise collided with reality and experience, longing grew.

2. This teacher

Then Jesus came. As He spoke, there was something new (**READ Matthew 7:28-29**). There was an immediacy to His words. He spoke of heaven as if He’d been there. He spoke of God as if He knew Him. The people began to ask, “*Could this be the Prophet?*” They could hear it.

With the manner of this Prophet, the expectations and the longings are finally met.

Illustration:

Think of “Night in the Museum”. It’s the story of a night watchman in a museum where the exhibits come to life. One of the subplots has to do with a tour guide laboring over a research paper on Sacagawea. She’s hit a writer’s block. But, in a turn of events, through the museum’s magic, she meets her subject. There she is – Sacagawea, the Shoshone Native American woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery. What more could she ask for? Now she can go to the source. She’ll know what she’s talking about!

Application:

How much more so with Jesus, the Great Prophet! Think with me. When He speaks on relationships, ethics, money, sex, power, life, death, origins and destinies, temporal and eternal life, He knows what He’s talking about. So we can trust Him. With what He relays, there will never be a need for revisions or retractions. When we hear Him, we’re going to the source.

Those are all things we want to know about. But how will we really know? Polls are worth hearing so we know where others are coming from. But we have to go to Jesus to know.

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II. THE MESSAGE OF THIS PROPHET

We see that with the manner of His ministry. And all the more so with His message.

A) The Theme

What was His message? Not merely a revelation of the ways of God but God Himself.

1. An astonishing moment

Consider an astonishing moment. As He grew, Jesus attended synagogue. He sat and listened to the Scriptures. Then later, He stood and read them. What was the subject of what was read?

2. An astonishing statement

He tells us. Easter Sunday - He makes an astonishing statement (**READ Luke 24:25-27**). All the prophecies, predictions, all the key persons and events; all the ceremonies and sacrifices; all the repeating and escalating patterns - they all cohere and come together in Him. Let that sink in.

B) The Source

But there's more. Jesus is not just the theme and subject. He is the author and source.

1. God of the prophets

Consider these words from John (**READ John 1:18**). Jesus is God, the God of the prophets.

2. Behind all the prophecies

And He is behind all the prophecies (**READ 1 Peter 1:10-11; Revelation 19:10**). The Old Testament is the Word of Christ, by Christ. It is not just about Him but by Him and from Him.

Clearly then, Jesus knew the message. For He is the message - its theme and source.

Illustration:

Think of the implications. It matters what you believe and that applies to a host of things. Mistletoe, for instance. Hang it up but please don't eat it. It's parasitic and poisonous. Eating the berries or the leaves can cause some pretty bad digestive distress. Okay. What if, after I tell you that, you decide to go home and snack on those decorations? Do you think your refusal to believe the warning will change the way things turn out? Try it and let me know how it goes.

Application:

I stress this because of common idea. You run into it all the time. Jesus says, "*I am the only way.*" And we say, "*Well, we can't be sure. We don't want to be dogmatic or offensive so let's boil down the opposing views to the lowest common denominator.*" What are we doing? Feigning the bent knee of humility, we are really just posturing with the stiff neck of arrogance. If God has spoken, God has spoken. In Christ, God has spoken. And it is ours to listen.

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III. THE MEANS OF THIS PROPHET

Given the manner and message, we need to hear and heed this Prophet. And also given the means of His working. For how will we really hear? How will the message break through?

A) Through His Word

He speaks through His Word. Which is just what we need – His inspired, inerrant Word.

1. The apostolic writers

Through His apostles (**READ John 14:25-26**). This is crucial for the life of the church and the writing of the New Testament, for the authority and reliability of the message. Jesus worked in them through the Holy Spirit to have written what He wanted written - no more and no less.

2. The apostolic word

The biblical writers bring us Gods very Word (**READ 2 Timothy 3:16-17**). This is the miracle of the inspiration of the Scriptures. We have God's Word breathed out for us to hear and read.

B) *By His Spirit*

He speaks through His Word. Through His Word and by His Spirit. Again, think with me as to what we need – not just the provision of the Word but transformation by the Word.

1. Illumination

And so Jesus illumines our hearts that we might have the ability to understand what He has had written (**READ Ezekiel 36:26-27**). This Prophet speaks and works deep change within us!

2. Enablement

And His greatness is such that He gives not just the ability to understand what is there but the ability to live it out and proclaim it. Truly, He gives sight to the blind and strength to the lame.

This is the wondrous means of Jesus' prophetic ministry. This is how He breaks through.

Application:

It's quite a gift. We rightly call the Bible the "Holy Scriptures". Scriptures - they are inscribed, written. And holy - they are separate, unlike anything else. So, of course, we have the need and obligation to treasure and read them. So how might you spend this Advent season? Give a child this gift. Sit with them and read. And give yourself this gift. Slow down and read.

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CONCLUSION:

Really, given who He is, we would be fools not to listen to Jesus. Think with me. I know that with the last election cycle, many said they'd had enough of career politicians. That is, many just said, "*I know you've got experience. But look what that's gotten us. Look at the mess we're in. I'll take my chances with the other guy.*" That was a strong impulse. But the fact is that we're a culture that typically looks to experts. When it comes down to things that directly affect us, we want someone who knows what they're doing. When the transmission is slipping, we go to the mechanic. When investments are to be made, we go to a financial planner. When the computer is crashing, we call a technician. When our bodies are failing, we seek out a physician. Many of us will even check out reviews before we go. We do all this instinctively. And we know that we will likely get into trouble if we pursue amateurs or charlatans instead.

We want the expert. Stay with me here. With Jesus, we have One truly above and beyond any expert. He is not just insightful but all-knowing. He is not merely the source of counsel but truth itself. It's shocking to consider that such a One walked this earth and lived among us. But let's take this one step further. He does not wait. He comes to us. This is a cosmic house-call. He came to us. And He comes to us. This is good news. Christmas is not about our reaching up and rising to heaven. It is about heaven reaching down and coming to us.

Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh. He is all that Moses was and longed for. And so much more. He is the long-awaited Great Prophet. Let us give Him our ears and heed Him.

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