

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
MINOCQUA, WI
SERMON FOR JANUARY 28/29, 2024

¹⁵ The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brother Israelites. Listen to him.

¹⁶ That is exactly what you asked from the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly. You said, “Do not let me hear the voice of the Lord my God anymore, and do not let me see this great fire again, or I will die.”

¹⁷ Then the Lord said to me, “They have done well by saying what they said. ¹⁸ I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them everything that I command him. ¹⁹ Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. ²⁰ Any prophet who presumes to speak something in my name that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks something in the name of other gods—that prophet shall die.”

(Deuteronomy 18:15-20 EHV)

“Daddy?” A little hand touched my forehead. I opened my eyes, which were fixed on the clock by my bed. It read 2:15. That would be a.m. “Yes?” (It was one of my four children – any one of them when they were growing up – about the age of four) “I need a drink of water.” OK! Thanks for the breaking news bulletin!

The kitchen was at the end of a long hallway on the other side of the house. When you’re four years old and wandering around the house in the middle of the night, a hallway can look five miles long, with multiple side rooms where giants are waiting to jump out and eat little kids for late-night snacks.

“Daddy? Please come with me.” “Thanks for the invitation,” I say, “but I’m kind of tired. You go ahead.” Shuffle. Shuffle. Stop. Turn around. Shuffle back. “Daddy?” Yes?” “Please go with me?” “OK.” So I crawled out of bed and we went together. You see, at that tender age of four or so, my children had not yet ventured out on their own to run such a middle-of-the-night errand. Each in their respective turn as a four-year-old had never been this way before.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the nation of Israel is on the verge of a new journey. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness following their escape from slavery in Egypt, they stood on the east bank of the Jordan River gazing west into the Promised Land. In all their travels, this was new. They had never been this way before.

This hallway looked five miles long, with multiple side rooms where giants were waiting to jump out and eat Israelites for late-night snacks. Men who’d scouted the territory had reported said how scary this new land its people were. ***“The land that we explored and scouted is a land that eats up its inhabitants. All the people we saw in the land were huge.”*** (Numbers 13:32) And this: ***“The people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. We also saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites are living in the land of the Negev. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites are living in the hill country. The Canaanites are living by the sea and along the Jordan.”*** (Numbers 13:28,29) Israel stands before a long, dark hallway. They had never been this way before.

What’s down your long, dark hallway? Do you know what awaits? Can you see? What scary giants and monsters lurk in the shadows and doorways, ready to take away your joy? Sickness? Heartache? Troubles with the kids? Troubles in your marriage? Financial setbacks? Or is fear of the unknown enough to clench your insides and fill your head with migraines? Who will lead you into your future?

Israel had someone to lead them by the hand from Egypt to the Promised Land. Moses. Under divine judgment because of an incident of disobedience, Moses would not be making the journey across the Jordan

River with them. And the people were terrified. Who would speak to God for them? Who would chase the giants out of the shadows for them? As far as the Old Testament Israelites were concerned, Moses was THE MAN. Consider some of his impressive, hall-of-fame caliber stats:

- Ten...Commandments given to and through him; God gave the Law through Moses!
- Ten...plagues, ten extraordinary miracles performed by Moses led Pharaoh to finally let the people go; then there's the crossing of the Red Sea and many more miracles during the years in the wilderness
- Five...books of the Bible; he wrote the first five books, Genesis - Deuteronomy
- 2 million...people – he led that number of people out of Egypt
- 40...years of leading them through the wilderness to the doorstep of the Promised Land.

More remarkable facts about Moses: he spoke with God face-to-face; he saw God's glory; he served not only as prophet (proclaiming God's Word) but as priest (he interceded for the people) and as king (he ruled them with absolute authority). When Moses returned to the people after meeting with God, he would always have to put a veil over his face, because it would shine from having been in God's presence. After his death, the Bible says, ***"Never again has a prophet risen in Israel like Moses, who knew the Lord face-to-face."*** (Deuteronomy 34:10). Moses was THE MAN of the Old Testament: a towering figure of faith, the greatest prophet. But he would soon die, leaving Israel to continue without his leadership.

But Moses offered this comfort: ***"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brother Israelites."*** (v. 15) Martin Luther calls this the most important passage in the book of Deuteronomy. Who would this be? A prophet, a fellow Israelite? Joshua was next up – faithful, powerful, dynamic. Many more prophets would follow: Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. All of these men were like Moses, especially in the power and authority of the Word of God. They led Israel throughout the centuries as the Lord enabled them.

So Joshua and the rest were all a fulfilment of this prophecy, and yet, not one measured up to Moses. Not one enjoyed the powerful, personal, face-to-face relationship with God that Moses did. Not one was in reality prophet, priest, and king/ruler.

And let's be clear – as amazing as Moses was, he was less than perfect. He may have been THE MAN but he was only a man. In his life, we see sin and grace at work. He once killed an Egyptian who was arguing with a fellow Israelite. He made all kinds of excuses when the Lord called him to lead the people: "Lord, I'm nobody, the people won't believe me, I can't speak eloquently." His anger at Meribah when he disobeyed the Lord's instructions kept him from entering the Promised Land. But despite his failings, the Lord brought Moses to the Promised Land of heaven.

There is a final fulfilment of this prophecy. ***"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brother Israelites."*** Who was like Moses? There was only one who would come and fit this description. In fact, he would exceed it.

Jesus was a prophet like Moses. He was a man like Moses. He ate, drank, walked and slept. He was like Moses in all respects, humanly speaking, except that Jesus never sinned. He was ***"from your brother Israelites,"*** a fellow Jew. He was a Prophet, he spoke the Word of the Lord. He performed miracles. He was also a great leader.

But is Jesus greater than Moses? Let's compare the two.

- Moses spoke the Word. Jesus is the Word. ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him everything was made...The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:1:1-3a, 14)
- Moses and all the other prophets said, "This is what the Lord says." Jesus Christ is the Lord.
- Moses and the others all pointed ahead to the Messiah, to the Redeemer. Jesus Christ is the Savior.

- Moses was the great Law-giver. The Ten Commandments were given through him. John wrote, ***"The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*** (John 1:17).

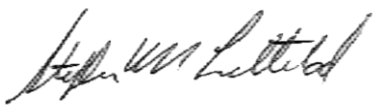
More about grace and truth, the Gospel. Jesus did not bring a terrifying message of condemnation, but a message of love and salvation, backed up by his awesome deliverance and victory over sin and Satan. Compared to Satan, Pharaoh is minor league. Satan held all people in bondage to the Law and in the chains of sin's power. But Jesus destroyed his hold on us by putting himself in our place with our sins on his shoulders. And on Calvary's cross, he paid the debt the world's sin (yours and mine, too!), freeing us forever and providing the guarantee by his resurrection from the dead. Moses brought people to the doors of the promised land of Canaan, but Jesus made it possible for all people to enter the heavenly Promised Land. Moses held out the Law, but Jesus proclaims the Gospel and calls out, ***"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"*** (Matthew 11:28).

Simply and undeniably, Jesus is greater than/better than/superior to Moses. Our second reading drives this point home: ***"Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the same way that the builder of a house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything. Moses was faithful as a servant within God's whole house by testifying to the things that would be spoken. But Christ is faithful as a Son over God's house."*** (Hebrews 3:3-6)

No doubt about it. Jesus is the greatest prophet. But it's not enough to just acknowledge the fact. The Lord says through Moses, ***"Listen to him."*** There are many voices calling out for our attention, promising happiness, promising success. It's noisy out there! The clang of commercialism, the lure of materialism, the appeal of self-help, astrologists, psychics, philosophies described as new age that are in reality recycled old trash - lots of noise, many voices, so many choices. We can't take this lightly. ***"Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."*** (v. 19) Indeed, ***"How will we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?"*** (Hebrews 2:3)

Only one voice rings true. The voice of Jesus Christ as he speaks to us in the Scriptures. We must listen to him. It's not an option. His Word is truth and life. Jesus said, ***"My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."*** (John 10:27,28). How do we listen? By reading the Bible, by hearing it in worship and studying it in Bible class, personal/family devotions. We listen by paying attention to mature Christian men and women, perhaps Christian parents and grandparents who have solid Scriptural advice to offer. We listen by remembering our Baptism and by receiving the Lord's Supper. These are the words and promises and power of God for you and for me!

Here, we remain on the "east bank" of the Jordan River, still gazing ahead to the Promised Land of heaven. It's a journey we've never taken before. We've never been this way before. It's uncharted territory for us. But you can march ahead. Whatever your dark hallway may be, whatever giants and scary things may lurk there, Jesus guarantees that you are never, ever, ever alone. ***"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brother Israelites. Listen to him."*** Listen, we must. Follow, we will!



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