



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 29, 2012

Epiphany 4

Sermon Text: [Deuteronomy 18:15-20](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Deuteronomy 18:15-20](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 1](#)

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 3:1-6](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:21-28](#)

Listen to the Promised Prophet

He is Your Go-Between

He is Absolutely Trustworthy

You've seen them already, haven't you? They have started, and they are going to continue now for quite some time. Those commercials that will come on during every commercial break for the different campaigns and the different people sponsoring those commercials. In the same commercial break you are going to see two commercials say the exact opposite thing, aren't you? This guy is great. This guy is terrible. This guy lies. This guy tells the truth. They are going to say about the same thing over and over, aren't they? You kind of get to the point during a political campaign like this when you see all these ads, or do you get to the point, I know I do, where you see that commercial and you just stop listening? It kind of becomes white noise in the background because you get so tired of it and you can't separate out all the voices, can you? You don't really want to after awhile anymore either. How do you know which one is telling the truth? You probably have already decided that in your mind, because you probably know who you are going to vote for anyway, for the most part. But a lot of times there are all these competing voices trying to get our attention and trying to give us a message. So often the messages conflict and contradict one another.

It's the same way in our spiritual life. We hear a lot of different voices. I'm assuming all of us are here this morning believe Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. ([John 14:6](#).) But that's not the message you hear all the time, is it? You hear that it doesn't really matter what God you worship as long as you worship some god. It's all the same God, just different names. You hear all kinds of conflicting messages about the way to eternal life, the way to heaven, the way to happiness. Maybe sometimes some people that you know are just like me with those political ads. They just get tired of hearing it all and they throw up their hands and say, "I don't know which voice to listen to! I don't know who is the one that is telling me the truth, so I'm just going to concentrate on" MTV or whatever it might be.

Our God comes to us this morning and he tells us that we have a voice to listen to. We have a voice that we listen to so that we can share. We want to listen to the prophet that he promised, a prophet that would be like Moses but would be greater than Moses, as we heard in our Second Lesson. This is the prophet who would be worthy of listening to because he would be the go-between. He would do for us between us and God what we could never do. He's worth listening to because of the power and the

truth that is in his message. The incredible thing I think is that our God's whole plan for getting this message out to the world relies on people like you and me. I know some of you and that just doesn't make sense to me that he would rely on people like us. But that's exactly what he does. And what an honor it is.

The words I read to you from Deuteronomy, this is after the children of Israel had wandered those 40 years in the wilderness because they wouldn't do what God said and go and enter the land of Canaan and fight the Canaanites. They said "They are like giants. We are like grasshoppers. It's not going to work, God." So God sent them into the wilderness for 40 years. One year for every day they had spent looking through the land. Now that generation that wouldn't do what God said had died out in the wilderness, and Moses is telling the next generation that is going to go into the Promised Land, he's recounting the whole history, recounting the whole Law, telling them everything God had said, giving the Laws God had said. Those Laws served a purpose.

Many of those Laws no longer apply to us today, like the one that was mentioned here at the end of our text. *If someone speaks in the name of other gods, they must be put to death...* God has not commanded us to do that. That was a Law for his Old Testament people of Israel. It's not part of his moral law of all time. But the part where it says God will call them to account, that part still applies. God will do the calling to account. He doesn't demand us to do that.

He tells the people, "There was that time when we were on Mount Sinai and God came on top of the mountain and the cloud descended over it and there was that lightning and there was that thunder, there was that noise, there was that fire. God's presence was revealed in fire, and God came and spoke to me face to face. You guys didn't want to hear God anymore because it's kind of scary." That makes sense because if God were to enter this room right now and speak to us and reveal his divine form, I, as a sinner, and you, as a sinner, I think would be terrified by it because in the presence of the holy, the unholy cannot stand. You and I on our own are sinners who can't stand in the presence of God unless God does something about it first.

So that made sense. God said that was a good idea. "Tell the people I am going to raise up a prophet like you and I am going to put my words in his mouth and when he comes and he speaks, you guys better listen to him." Then a long time later, 1,500 years later, Jesus came to earth. Do you remember at Jesus Baptism what the voice from heaven said? "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him." ([Matthew 17:5.](#)) Isn't that what he told us? God says, "This is the one I had promised. This is the prophet that was going to come."

Think about how Moses was a prophet unlike any other. He saw God face to face and received from God these things, so to speak. He saw the presence of God. God revealed his glory to him, but only from behind he said. He hid him in the cleft on the cliff. ([Exodus 33:21-23.](#)) But Jesus not only sees the glory of God, he IS the glory of God. So he is superior to Moses.

Moses served as a go-between. God spoke to Moses. Moses spoke to the people. Jesus is our go-between in as being God himself. He speaks to us. He teaches us. You see in the Gospel today how it says that Jesus taught with authority. His words had power that were different than anyone else's. I think that's vital for us to remember and think about. But as this go-between...Jesus serves as go-between in another way that you and I so desperately need.

God gave all these laws through Moses. Moses was the one that was the go-between that brought all the laws. He said do this, do that, don't do this, don't do that, and it laid out all these things and all these demands that were so heavy, they couldn't do it. You and I can't do it. No one you know can do it. We can't keep the Law perfectly. We are born as sinners and we do what we are. We are born sinful, so we sin. God says, "don't" and we think it's a sign that says "wet paint." We are going to go do it and show God we know better. That's just how we are. And that condemns us to hell because God says the wages of sin is death. ([Romans 6:23.](#))

Be perfect, as I, your heavenly Father is perfect. ([Matthew 5:48.](#)) Not do your best. Not be better than someone down the road. Not have good intentions. God says to be perfect. You and I can't do it, so we need someone that can do it in our place. That's where Jesus was the go-between that does exactly what we need. He lived a perfect life where you and I can't. He kept every one of God's Laws. I can't fathom what that would be like.

My mom is here. She's up in the front row over there. Ask her on the way out. I didn't obey her the whole time I was growing up. There are at least two times I disobeyed mom.

You know that's what we are. Can you imagine that though? That Jesus perfectly obeyed his parents every single moment of every single day of his life. I can't fathom that. I can't understand that because I'm a sinner. And you can't either. But all you have to know is that he did it because you can't. He did it in your place.

This is one of the things, I said this earlier, there are a lot of competing voices about religion. And I think there are a lot of uninformed voices about what our faith is about, what Christianity is about. I think a lot of people think Christianity is a bunch of rules that you keep. You keep these rules or else you are going to be in trouble with God. God gave us that whole Law to show us that we can't keep the rules. It shows us we need a go-between to come and keep the rules in our place. Christianity is about Jesus, who lived in our place. He was our substitute. What God demanded of us he gave to us because Jesus was perfect in our place as our go-between. Then Jesus takes all of our sins, heaps them on his back, carries them to the cross, and he dies as the punishment that our sins deserve. He endured hell because you and I are sinners. He endured hell because the children of Israel were sinners. He endured hell because everyone that ever has lived or ever will live are sinners. He took all that sin away.

Christianity is about what God has done for us, about his perfect love that takes away sin. That perfect love changes us. It makes it not a “have to” for me to keep God’s law. It makes it now “I want to.” I want to say thank you because I don’t always do it. I am still a sinner. I’m still going to sin. You are too. But this message of God’s love and forgiveness in Christ changes us so that we want to do what God wants us to do. The greatest desire of my heart, of the new self that lives in me, is to love God above everything else. Unfortunately I have a sinful nature, and so do you, that still wants to love me more than anything else. You’re sinful nature wants to love you more than it loves God. So we have this constant struggle and this constant fight. We still stumble and fall. Yet every time we do, we can run back to the cross of Christ. We can run back to our baptismal waters that washed away our sins, like we saw this morning. That’s the beauty of our God. That’s the beauty of our faith. It’s not about what we do. It’s about what he did for us.

But there is still that nagging question. How can you be sure? How can you know? How can you trust that? There are so many different voices. How can you trust this voice of the promised prophet? Our God tells us that we can trust him because he is truth. He tells us that he is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. And when you see him speak in Scripture, like we saw in the Gospel, you see that power with which he speaks.

The people were amazed even before Jesus kicked that demon out of that guy. They were amazed at how powerful his words were. They said he spoke as one who has authority, not as the teachers of the Law. He spoke as one who is trustworthy is what you could say as well, right? What was different?

Any of you that have sat in my Confirmation Class over the last few years as kids, you’ve heard me say I don’t want you to be parrots. I don’t want you just to repeat the right answer because you know it’s the right answer. I want you to think and I want you to know why God said what he did. Not just what he said, but why he said what he did. Anybody can be a parrot. A parrot can repeat the right answers.

The teachers of the Law were repeating what they thought were the right answers. They were telling people, “On the Sabbath day you can only walk so far. Any farther and you have sinned.” Because they were still trying to get closer to God by keeping the Law. They didn’t see the point that the Law was there to show them they needed a Savior. You can’t save yourself by keeping the Law.

Jesus taught with power and authority. The trustworthiness of his nature...he said, “You’ve heard it said, ‘Do not murder.’” You think, “Okay, I’ve never done that.” But then here comes the power and the trustworthiness of his message. He says, “I tell you, anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and the love of God is not in him.” ([Matthew 5:21-22](#).) All of a sudden there is some power there. There is some truth there, right? We know in our hearts what sinners we are. We know how we don’t love our neighbor as ourselves. We know how sometimes we go the exact opposite. We go

into hate. Jesus said, "You've heard it said, don't commit adultery. I tell you anyone that looks at a women with lust in his heart has sinned against God." ([Matthew 5:27-28.](#))

We think we can keep the Law and get closer to God by what we do. God says, "Don't even think about it. You're a sinner through and through. That's not going to bring you closer to God. Here is what God is demanding of you, and you can't do it." The trustworthiness of his message is seen in how he lays bare the secrets of our souls that we try to hide from one another.

Then he comes to us with a message that is not just repeated but that has a passion and a truth that says that he is that way, the truth and the life. That's what he said. He said if you want to know the Father, look at him. ([Luke 10:22.](#)) He says that his life and his death takes away our sins so that we can stand before God. If that Holy God were to appear in his divine glory here today, our initial reaction I'm certain would be fear because we are still sinners. But there is a part of us, the new self in us, the Holy Spirit that lives in us, that would lead us to lift up our faces and look at our God and praise and honor him because he has taken away our sins and he has given us eternal life. That message is trustworthy. I've seen the power of that message in the lives of people. I've seen how God's Word changes us. I can't convince you that it's true, but God can as he shares it with you.

And here's the best part...you and I get to be the voice of God. You and I get to share Jesus with others. You and I get to tell other people that, yes, they are sinners, but there's an answer. The answer is Jesus. And if you think you don't know how to do it, I think I'm offering three different Bible classes to teach you how right now. Just stop in and join us.