

²⁰But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

Today's sermon text is part of the farewell sermon of Moses. He is reminding the children of Israel of the covenant which Israel made with God.

This farewell address includes the Law which came with the covenant, and the history of the people on the Exodus. Moses is rehashing how they got to where they were, and where God promises to take them.

The context of the promise of that (Prophet like Moses) was the first time the children of Israel faced Mount Sinai. They heard the rumblings on the mountain and the sound like a loud trumpet, playing the call and salute to the King of Kings! They saw the fire burning at the peak.

Exodus tells us that smoke went up from the entire top of the mountain like a furnace. The people faced the clouds and the flashes of lightning and they felt the shaking of the mountain and they heard the violent thunder. It must have been awesome because the people were terrified.

They cried out in fear, verse 16: **"Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die."**

When they had the opportunity to experience what most people think they would love to experience, to see God and hear God directly, they recoiled in fear and pleaded that God would speak through His chosen messenger instead.

And God agreed. In fact, it appears that it was the plan of God to teach His people that they could not bear to face God directly—but rather they would have to listen to those He sent to proclaim His Word. It is a lesson He is still trying to teach His people.

Then God made a promise to them. The promise He made was one of the greatest promises of all times. He promised to send to them a prophet like Moses to reveal God and his will with clarity and power.

Century after century rolled on and prophet after prophet was sent by God, but those prophets failed to be "just like Moses."

If it wasn't clear at the outset, it became clear over time that the promised prophet was going to be the Messiah.

Today God's Word from Deuteronomy 18 talks to us about a prophet. In today's text God is recounting everything that has happened to the Children of Israel in the Exodus.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the children of Israel are camped on the side of the Jordan River, looking across the river into the Promised Land.

God is retelling the Law to them. Moses the great man of God is preaching several sermons in the book of Deuteronomy to the people of God.

In Deuteronomy 5 we have the 10 Commandments given in Exodus 20. In today's text Moses is reminding the people of what they said when they heard God's Law, the 10 Commandments.

The people had a hard time hearing the harsh law and God knew this, he said in verse 15: **"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen."**

Moses the great prophet is pointing ahead to the one who would be an even greater than Moses.

In verse 16: Moses said: **"Just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'"**

The Israelites complained to God. We cannot stand your presence and your Holy Law, send someone else. That's precisely what God does; He will send one who will speak God's Word; the one who is God's Word.

The Word incarnate, the Word in the flesh, the eternal Word (the eternal Logos) who takes on flesh and blood and makes his dwelling among us.

He will speak God's Word truthfully and faithfully, unlike any other prophet; because this prophet even though he speaks God's Word truthfully and faithfully; this prophet will die; not because he has spoken a false word or given a false prophecy. He will die because that's the mission of this prophet.

This prophet will fulfill that harsh Law, this prophet who will be the mediator between God and man—the only path to salvation. This prophet who will bleed and die and rise again from the dead.

It's in this prophet, not a prophet of Law, but a prophet of life. A prophet of gospel. A prophet of hope.

It's this prophet—Jesus Christ, that God speaks to and through. It's this prophet that Moses pointed forward to. It's this prophet, and more than a prophet that we receive his gifts in the Divine service each time we come into God's House.

God continues to speak through his inspired and infallible Word, and he calls servants from among the people. They are servants of the Word, one who is called to speak God's Word in its truth and purity.

As pastors, we are those servants. We're not more forgiven or have a special status. We're sinners, just like all human beings, but God has called us and he has given us his Word.

1 John 5:9-10 **⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.
¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.**

He has given us a message to teach and preach. A message of Law and a message that swallows up the Law, Jesus Christ crucified and after three days risen from the grave never to die again for the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

God calls his prophets (pastors) today and he holds them accountable; he gives some very specific words of accountability.

Verse 20 says: **But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'**

Beware of the pastor who doesn't take God's Word seriously. As Jeremiah reminded us; the pastor or prophet who says: "peace, peace," when there is no peace.

This is serious business, because pastors sometimes want to puff themselves up; because precious souls are at stake.

Souls that Jesus Christ bled and died for; we have his Word sealed with his blood.

1 John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

You, who have been redeemed by the blood of the prophet, priest, and king who was once dead is now alive. Each one of you has been grafted into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Each one of you has been given this same Word. Sometimes we don't always treat this Word with the respect it deserves. At times we would rather be doing other things than reading and studying God's Word.

When God's Word takes second or third place in our lives? Satan wins! We have disregarded Christ and his Word.

Let us repent of our apathy and indifference to God's Word. Let us repent and believe the Good News that Jesus Christ, the prophet who came for us and for our salvation.

Brothers and sisters in Christ; Royal Priests in God's Kingdom; God calls us to be accountable, not based on numbers, or the bottom line, or popularity, but based on faithfulness to his Word.

Let us be thankful for everything the Lord gives to us this Advent, especially spending time together with family, and friends.

And the most important gift, the coming Jesus who gives us the greatest gift, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Let us make this upcoming Christmas, and New Year a year where we are committed to studying and digesting God's Word, trusting in the power of God's Word to do what it says. Amen.