

INI

Deuteronomy 18,15-19

Epiphany 4 — 29 January 2010

Greeting: To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Old Testament lesson from Deuteronomy, the Fifth Book of Moses, which was read earlier:

[Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them:] “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to Him.”

So far the reading. Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Introduction: We’ve all heard advertisements for products that are “new and improved.” Laundry detergents add a new enzyme that guarantees to clean better and clothes will be brighter. Operating systems for computers are upgraded every few years — oftentimes correcting the glitches that plagued them in previous versions, and sometimes giving rise to new one. Various types of gasoline are touted as having new ingredients that will let your car run smoother. The list goes on.

Now Moses is telling God’s Old Testament people that one day in the future, God will raise up a Prophet like Moses from among God’s own people. The people should listen to Him.

But is Moses just speaking of a new and improved version of himself? Is Moses just saying to God’s people that a long line of prophets will succeed him, for example, Amos, Elijah, Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, and others? Will all these be new and improved versions of Moses?

Or is Moses speaking about more than a new and improved version of himself? Is Moses speaking of someone Whom God will send Who will be

incomparably greater than Moses and offer that which Moses could not offer?

This brings me to this morning's sermon topic, "**Moses Points To Jesus.**" I'll develop this topic in three points:

- 1) Moses, God's Prophet;**
- 2) Jesus Is Greater Than Moses;** and,
- 3) Listen To Jesus**

1) Moses, God's Prophet. There is no doubt that Moses is God's great Old Testament prophet. He is the one whom God chose to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. He parted the Red Sea to help them escape, and then closed the waters over the pursuing Egyptian chariots so that they would be safe. He led them to Mount Sinai, where God would meet them and give them His Law.

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai, however, the people down below rebelled, and made a golden calf, and worshiped that calf, and said that this idol made by the hands of men had led them out of Egypt and was their god. God was not pleased.

Moses interceded with God so that God would not destroy the people, the idol worshipers. When Moses finally came down from Sinai, his face shone with the holiness and glory of God Himself.

Even though Moses had prayed for the people, this glow reminded the people of their sin and apostasy. Even though God had forgiven the people because He was a God of lovingkindness, each time they saw Moses' unveiled face, they were afraid that God's holiness would condemn and consume them.

But more than that, God's Law, which Moses brought to the people, also reminded them that they were sinful and unclean.

Just think of the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

With the memory of the golden calf fresh in their minds, what were the people to think? What were the people to think when the penalty for breaking

faith with God was death?

Thus they said that they no longer wanted to hear God's voice or see the fire of God's holiness.

And so Moses was moved by God Himself, and told the people that one day God would raise up a Prophet from among them, from their very midst. He too would speak God's very Word.

But this prophet would not be a new and improved Moses, or, in the words of computer-speak, a Moses two-point-o.

The New Testament tells us Who this Prophet is.

After healing a lame man on the steps of the temple in Jerusalem, Peter told the people:

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He had thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away ... and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, Whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Moses said, "The Lord God shall raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you." (Acts 3,18-22)

Thus, we see to Whom it is that Moses pointed. Moses pointed to Jesus; and:

2) Jesus Is Greater Than Moses. Yes, according to Peter and the rest of the New Testament, Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses, however great he was as a prophet of God, was never one through whose suffering sins were wiped away.

During His earthly ministry Jesus asked His disciples Whom the people thought He was.

And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah, and others,

Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” And Jesus said to them, “But Who do you say that I am?” And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said to Him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjonas, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16,14-17)

Yes. Peter on his own was unable to connect the dots. But by inspiration of God Himself, Peter saw Jesus for Who He really was, God’s Son, the long-promised Messiah.

Moses said of Jesus that God Himself would give Him to His people out of their very midst.

He was born of the Virgin Mary in the city of David, Bethlehem. He was from the tribe of Judah, David’s own tribe. But His Father was none other than God Himself.

To all outward appearances, there was nothing to physically distinguish Jesus from any of His fellow-Jews, His countrymen.

As He went about His earthly ministry, His face did not shine as Moses’ had. There was nothing in His outward appearance to make people afraid. Indeed, when Philip said to Jesus,

“Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” The words that I say to you I do not speak on My Own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” (John 14,8-9)

Jesus did not glow as Moses had, because even though Jesus was God the Son Who had taken on our flesh and blood, in His taking on our flesh He had humbled Himself, and for our sake had become obedient, obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Jesus’ humility meant that He could die as anyone else. In fact, in His suffering and death, His humility was such that all of His disciples except John deserted Him. And was it any wonder?

In His dying, Jesus died like anyone else would die. He did not glow with God's glory, but gradually lost His color as His life drained away — drained away on account of the bleeding lash marks, drained away on account of the blood dripping from his pierced hands and feet, drained away on account of where the crown of thorns pierced His head.

But most of all, His life drained away under the unimaginable burden of bearing our sins and the sins of the world. For it was for us, that instead glowing with the glory of God on Golgotha, He took on the grey color of death itself.

But even though the disciples had run away from death itself, Jesus rose from the dead to gather them, and tell them and us that because He died and rose again, they might never again fear death but have life in its place.

Moses points to Jesus, not only the Prophet, but also the Messiah, Who is the very Word of Life. Thus, Moses told the people, as he tells us:

3) Listen To Jesus. Jesus said that he who sees Him not only sees the Father, but He who hears Jesus' words hears the very voice of God Himself. To listen to Jesus is to listen to God.

The defining mark of a prophet of the true and living God is to faithfully speak God's Word and in all things to do God's will.

Moses tells us to listen to Jesus because Jesus brings us a new Word from God Himself.

Luther rightly said that the people feared God's voice as the voice of the Law and death. Inwardly they longed for another voice, the voice of the Gospel, but they did not know to pray for this voice. (Luther, "Auslegung über das fünfte Buch Moses, in *Luthers Sämmlische Schriften*, St. Louis, 3:1526)

When the time was just right in God's eternal plan of salvation, "He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law" (Galatians 4,4-5).

In His words and life, Jesus bought back all those under the Law from sin,

death, and the power of the devil. He tells all who are living under the crushing weight of the Law, that is, the demand to be perfect, to come unto Him, for Jesus gives rest.

This rest is given through the forgiveness that Jesus won for us by actively and passively fulfilling all the demands of the Law.

To listen to Jesus is to trust that He has lived and died for me. That He has risen from the dead for me. That because He has died and risen for me, I too shall live with Him and live for Him here in the life on this earth that He has given me and live with Him in heaven in the life eternal He has prepared for me.

The demands of the Law are endless. Its burden is the burden of doing everything right and doing it perfectly — all of the time!

Thus, Jesus did not come to be the “new Moses,” to somehow tinker with the Law and give a new and improved version of it so that somehow it might more easily be followed and give life instead of death.

As the Prophet whom God would raise up, Jesus came to give Himself as the sinless Lamb of God Who came to take away the sin of the world (John 1,29). To use the words of computers, this is a whole new operating system, and not some patch that hopes to correct the errors of the old system.

Jesus shares this forgiveness with us in the most humble of means. No flashing lights from heaven. No words of thunder. But through the Means of Grace — His Word spoken or read, His Word of Holy Baptism, His Word of Absolution, His Word given in and through His true Body and Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

The tragedy, however, is that during His lifetime and even today, people have not heeded Moses’ injunction, “Listen to Him.” They did not want to listen to Moses as he spoke the Word of God, and they do not want to listen to the Prophet to whom He pointed.

Many think of Jesus as only a prophet, one who shows us the way to live, kind of like putting a patch on the Law and fixing the old operating system to make it easier. To follow this path is to end up with the Trinity-denying

Unitarians or apostasy. Here one might think of Thomas Jefferson who make his own Bible, but cut out all the miracles and definitely cut out the resurrection.

Many deny that Baptism forgives, denying original sin, and believing that in one way or another, we can fulfill the demands of the Law and thus make ourselves perfect in God's sight apart from Jesus. What is the end of this thinking? Again, one is lead into Trinity-denying Unitarianism or apostasy itself.

What does Jesus say?

And if any man hear My Words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My Words, has One who judges him. The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12,47-48)

To reject Jesus, to reject His Word, means to reject what Jesus offers — the forgiveness of sins, access to the Father, and life and salvation.

Conclusion: Jesus is not a new and improved version of Moses. He is not an extra additive designed to make the old work better or a patch to cover up the glitches of an old system.

Jesus is the Word become flesh, true man and true God. As such, He is the Word Who died and Who rose again, and in Him, and only in Him, do we have what the Law could never give, the forgiveness of our sins.

In Jesus, God raised up a Prophet, but more than just a prophet. He gave us His only Son so that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have life eternal. Amen

Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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