

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

¹⁶That 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.”

¹⁷Then the LORD said to me, “They have done well by saying what they said. ¹⁸I 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. ¹⁹Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. ²⁰Any 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.” (EHV)

Theme: Listen to God’s Prophet: Jesus

1. He speaks to us through his Word
2. We will see him face to face in heaven

Those who are in charge often don’t talk directly to a lot of people; they have others who do that for them. Take the President of the United States for example—he has Press Secretary who meets with the White House Press corps on a regular basis. The US has 189 ambassadors to other countries who speak to foreign officials on behalf of the President. Sure, the President can address the nation whenever he wants, he can call and talk to and even visit foreign dignitaries—and he often does. But he will often work through mediators, often simply for the sake of time. God works in a similar way; he has people speak for him. Not that he doesn’t have the time, not that he doesn’t care about the needs of his people, or that he doesn’t want to get bogged down in the small and insignificant. But for our own sake, he works through others, like prophets who shared his Word with the people.

Moses was one such prophet. After the Lord saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt he led them to Mount Sinai. The Lord appeared to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai and spoke to him. The top of the mountain was covered in a thick dark cloud. We read in Exodus that the Lord came down to the mountain with fire and smoke rose up, and the mountain trembled violently. The sound of a ram’s horn was heard, and God spoke to Moses like it was loud clasps of thunder. Barriers were set up on the base of the mountain for God warned Moses that if anyone even touched the mountain they would die.

God then gave the 10 commandments to the people. But the people couldn’t handle it. Moses writes in Exodus 20 right after the 10 commandments, **All the people saw and heard the thunder and the lightning and the sound of the ram’s horn and the mountain smoking. The people saw, and they trembled and stood far away. Then they said to Moses, “Speak with us yourself, and we will listen, but do not let God speak with us, or we will die.”** What a stark reminder of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of mankind. The people could never obey the 10 commandments that were commanded of them. God was so holy and magnificent, that even though he hid himself, it was still too much for the people to handle. If something didn’t change, they were going to die. So, they asked that Moses be a mediator, a go-between, for God and the people, which is exactly what happened.

Fast forward about 40 years. The Israelites were on the verge of entering into the Promised Land. Moses was giving the law again—this time to a new generation, this is what the book of Deuteronomy was all about. As part of their punishment for failing to trust in the Lord to give them the land of Canaan when the 12 spies went in, everyone who was over 20 years old at the time died. And now, a new generation, sat down and heard the law from Moses, the prophet of God.

The history of the Israelites is a history of the people rebelling against God and against Moses. It happened again and again. They failed to trust God; they didn't listen to Moses—they complained about both of them. Moses himself fell into sin. He wasn't allowed to enter into the Promised Land because of his own rebellion against God. And so, before this new generation entered the Promised Land, Moses also took the opportunity to warn and encourage them.

Before our text he warned the people not to be like the pagan Canaanites, who not only worshiped false gods, but also practiced the occult.

They wouldn't need such things because God was going to provide another prophet for the people—another one to speak God's Word to them on behalf of God and to God on behalf of the people. This prophecy was fulfilled by the other prophets who would follow after Moses—prophets like Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

But there is one prophet, who is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise: Jesus. In our sermon for the first Sunday of January, from John 7, we saw the people debating whether or not Jesus was The Prophet, a reference to our text for today. The people were mistaken because they separated this promised prophet from Christ, the Promised Savior. But they are one and the same. But both Peter, in Acts 2, and Stephen in Acts 7 refer to our text today and teach us that this prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus was an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah; and he is the one who spoke God's Word to the people.

In our second lesson the Writer to the Hebrews compares Moses to Jesus and proves that there really is no comparison. Jesus is far superior to Moses in every way. Moses was only a servant of the Lord, but Jesus, as God, rules over his entire house. To begin his letter, the Writer to the Hebrews points to Jesus as the one through whom God now speaks, **In the past, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets at many times and in many ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.**

We no longer need prophets today. We no longer need someone to speak God's Word to us. For God inspired Word has been written down for us. Everything that God wants us to know has been written down his Holy Bible. And it is through the words of Scripture, and the words of Scripture alone, through which Jesus still speaks to us. God doesn't need a spokesmen any longer, he speaks directly to us in his Word!

And in a different way, Jesus is also our mediator. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2, **there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.** As God and man; as a prophet but also a priest, Jesus is perfectly suited to serve as the mediator between the Holy God and sinful mankind, as he makes us holy in God's sight!

Moses command to the people was the listen to the Promised Prophet. Some did, but many rejected Jesus. The people of his hometown of Nazareth tried to throw him off a cliff, the Jewish leaders wanted him gone, and the people were stirred up to convince Pilate to have Jesus crucified.

We may be Christians, but at times, we also fail to listen to Jesus. Yes, we are here today or watching online, but at times by not worshiping, not attending Bible Study, not having home devotions, we refuse to hear his word. And often, even when we do hear his word, we aren't really listening. Our minds are elsewhere, we are thinking of something else, the word goes in

one ear and out the other. Then there is actually putting God's Word into practice—not just listening to it but believing it and obeying it. It is here that our sinful nature kicks into high gear; and, if we are honest about it, our sinful nature often wins out. Christ and him crucified for our salvation is especially offensive to our sinful nature, and we have the tendency to think that it's up to us to fix our problems, or at the very least, to help Christ out.

Because we are selfish, because we think we know better, because we want to live our lives the way we want to, we don't listen to what Christ tells us. We have the tendency to follow after someone who will scratch our itching ears—who will say what we want him to say instead of what we need to hear. We search for someone who makes us feel good about ourselves and perhaps doesn't talk to so much about those portions of God's Word that our sinful nature doesn't agree with, or the parts that make us uncomfortable in one way or another. There is a reason why Moses urges the people first to listen to The Prophet, instead of false teachers, **Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.**

We listen to Jesus as he speaks to us through his Word. We don't want to listen to false teachers because whenever they teach something false, they aren't letting Jesus speak. So we want to stay away from, or at the very least be weary of listening, watching, or reading Christian content from those who don't teach God's Word in its truth and purity. It may seem harmless, but it's like drinking water with a little bit of poison in it; it puts our faith and eternal life at risk.

As great as Moses was, his message was greatly inferior to Christ's. Even though what Moses said was directly from the Lord, he spoke mostly law. He ushered in what we call the Old Covenant. This covenant was a two-sided agreement. It said, if you obey these commandments God will bless you, but if you don't obey, God will punish you. That sounds simple enough. But if we honestly examine ourselves according to the 10 commandments, we realize how impossible it is to do anything to save ourselves, because the harder we try and we still fail. So, the Old Covenant was one that put a great burden—and guilt—on God's people.

But Jesus brought a new covenant. The Old Covenant said you must obey God or be punished. But the New Covenant says Christ obeyed God perfectly for you, so you won't be punished. In the New Covenant Jesus has done everything for us through his perfect life and innocent suffering and death. The Old Covenant condemns, but the New Covenant saves, as Paul writes in Romans 11, **this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.** And this New Covenant, replaces the old one. The writer to the Hebrews explains what this means for us, **By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.** And this New Covenant, this forgiveness of sins, is what we are given in the Sacrament of Holy Communion!

So once again, we listen to the promised Prophet, Jesus. Not only is he superior to Moses, but so is his message. As Peter once confessed, **Lord to whom shall we go, you have the Words of everlasting life.** Moses was sent with the law that condemned, Jesus came with the gospel, and he himself saved the entire world. Moses served the Lord, Jesus is the Lord and the God of Moses! Both spoke God's Word—but it was Moses' gospel that prepares our hearts for Christ's gospel! So, we listen to his Word and partake of his Holy Sacrament.

When God appeared on Mount Sinai and spoke to the people, they needed Moses to serve as a mediator. This side of heaven, we too need a mediator, Jesus, to intercede for us and plead our case before God. But in heaven we will have no reason for a mediator. For our sins have been forgiven, Christ's perfect life is ours. And there in Heaven we will see Jesus as he is—in his full divine glory, and we will share in that glory. And instead of being afraid of being sinners standing before the holy God in his full divine splendor and might, we will rejoice. And we'll join together with the choirs of heaven, singing the praises of God's Prophet, Jesus! Amen.