

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." 17 The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. 20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

Dear Friends of the Lord Jesus,

The news these days sounds like a broken record, doesn't it. Over and over again we hear about the financial crisis that has overtaken our nation and the entire world. We hear about companies sliding into bankruptcy. There are regular reports about the declines in the stock market and the deteriorating health of banks. More and more people are losing their jobs. And the question that many of us have is, "When is this all going to end?"

My parents' generation talks about the Great Depression and how today's problems remind them of those terrible days. Yet for myself, and perhaps for many of you too, that doesn't help very much. You see I didn't live through the Great Depression. In spite of any similarities with this past, this is a new time and it certainly is a new set of circumstances. What should we do? How are we going to face a future that seems to have more questions than answers? We just don't know what tomorrow will bring because we haven't been on this road before.

What does the future have in store for us? Without a clear idea of what's ahead, how can we go forward with any sort of confidence? These questions are not new. The Lord this morning uses the prophet Moses to teach us how to live in the face of uncertainty. ***We Have Never Been This Way Before.*** 1) We need a prophet like Moses and 2) the Lord has provided someone greater.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, God's Old Testament people, the Israelites, were experiencing something new. The nation had traveled from Egypt to Sinai and from Sinai into the desert. After forty years in the wilderness, Israel traveled north on the King's Highway. They went around Edom and through the plains of Moab. Now the Israelites were on the east bank of the Jordan River gazing west into the Promised Land. In all their travels most of the people had never been this way before.

Their future was filled with uncertainty. The Lord had promised them this land, but would they be able to take control of it? It's not as if the land was empty and they could just move in. In Numbers 13[:29] we are told: **"The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."** In order for God's people to live in this land, other people would have to be moved out. And they would not move willingly. Even getting into the land was a problem. There were no bridges over the Jordan River. And once they made it into the Promised Land, they would come to Jericho with its strong walls. Like a small child who gets up in the middle of the night and is scared because he or she doesn't know what is in the dark, the Israelites were afraid. They had never been this way before.

They had come to depend on their leader Moses. Moses spoke with God. Moses told them what to do. But now they found out that Moses wasn't going with them. The Lord had said Moses could not enter the Promised Land. Who would lead the people now? The one upon whom they depended was about to leave. Could they trust anyone else? For as long as they could remember, Moses had been there. Now no Moses. They had never been this way before.

You know that same sinking feeling, and so do I. Along with the Israelites of old we face many unknowns. Maybe you are terrified at the thought of bringing a new child into your home or watching your last child leave home. Maybe you are facing a situation on the job that has your stomach tied up in square knots. Maybe it's a financial setback or perhaps your parents are becoming weak and unsteady.

Some are facing a future that's so painful and so private that it's only known to God. Whatever the situation might be, we mutter under our breath, "What am I going to do? I've never been this way before."

Israel lost Moses and was uncertain of who would lead or what would happen. That hits pretty close to home, doesn't it? For the first time in almost 30 years Trinity Lutheran Church is experiencing a pastoral vacancy. How long will the vacancy last? What happens if we call and no one comes? What's going to happen to the congregation? Questions, concerns, doubts – all these trouble us. Some of you have literally never been this way before. For others it has been such a long time that you may have forgotten what it's like. What does the future have in store for us?

The temptation is to look only to ourselves for answers. In our uncertainty Satan lies to us. He whispers in our ears, "Take no chances. Expect the worst. Protect yourself with a list of won'ts, don'ts, can'ts, and quits. Think about every possible peril, focus on the dangers, and worry yourself with 'What if?' Satan and the world offer only lies. But remember, God does not leave us alone. He doesn't desert us. Pay attention to the words of our text.

Moses promises, "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me.**" Because Moses was unable to enter the Promised Land, he promises another prophet just like himself. Joshua was the first of these prophets who was like Moses and spoke the Lord's word. Joshua safely led Israel to inherit the Promised Land. Other prophets like Moses followed Joshua -- Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. These prophets were the Lord's voice, leading his people.

The final and best fulfillment of the Lord's promise of a prophet like Moses is Jesus, who is greater than Moses. Jesus not only speaks the truth, he is the truth. He not only speaks God's Word, he is God's Word become flesh. Jesus not only knew the Father face-to-face, he is the face of the Father. Moses longed to see the Lord's glory, while Jesus is the glory of the Father. Some who heard Jesus did everything they could to silence his voice and stop his teaching. When their evil scheming and underhanded treachery failed, they finally used Judas and Pilate. They used whips and thorns, nails and spear. "There!" they thought. "He will never speak again!" But three days later, Jesus spoke, "**Peace to you!**" (Luke 24:36). "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**" (Matthew 28:18).

All of God's Old Testament promises found fulfillment in Jesus. God kept his promises and he continues to keep his promises to us. We are not alone. We are not out of God's sight or out of his mind. Remember that, when faced with the pain, doubts, and uncertainties of daily life. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. God works all things out for the good of his people. That's not wishful thinking. That's not some well meaning person talking who has little if any ability to back up the word with actions. No, that is God's promise to us. Whether our concerns are about the economy or our health or our future, the Lord knows about these issues and he already knows what he will do about them.

That's true for Trinity Lutheran Church. The Lord already knows who our next pastor will be. We don't but we can wait confidently because God keeps his promises. The Lord gives us an example of a great promise kept this morning. Moses promised and Jesus fulfilled. Moses was taken away and God gave Jesus.

Jesus lives to lead us by his Word. Jesus forgives our sins. Satan must bow to his Word. With confident hope, we wait to discover what the Lord has in store for us today and tomorrow and the next day. We can even look ahead with confidence to our final journey: the grave, the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come!

Whenever you have concerns and questions. Whenever dark unknowns frighten you, just listen. God is speaking. He says, "Go!" But we have never been this way before. Yes, that's true. But the Lord guarantees you will never, ever, go it alone. "**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.**" Listen to the Lord. He provides us with exactly what we need. He gives us strength to live as his children. He blesses us in ways we do not even see now. Listen, we must. Follow, with his grace, we will! Amen.

1 February 2009

Pastor James F. Korthals
Trinity Lutheran Church
Pleasant Valley Rd
West Bend, Wisconsin