

**Listen to Him! Deuteronomy 18:15-20**  
**Pastor Thomas Kock 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany February 5, 2012**

In the name of Jesus, the ultimate prophet, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, have you started to follow the political campaigns? Yep, they're going on full-bore. And one thing you can count on during the next few months; you're going to hear a whole bunch of rhetoric. You're going to hear all kinds of promises, all kinds of plans. You're going to hear words upon words upon words.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could count on all those promises and words actually happening?!? ☺

Of course, to be fair, it's not just politicians who say things which they don't mean, or who make promises which aren't fulfilled. I don't know how many times I've heard people who have just taken a new job say, "Well, it wasn't quite what they described during the hiring process." How easy it is for us parents to make promises and then not follow through on them. (And by the way, that's incredibly hurtful, because it leads kids to not pay attention when we say things, because they don't know if they can trust what we say.) Friends make promises which don't come true, companies make claims about their products and those claims prove to not be the truth, etc. Over and over again we hear promises; and over and over again we see promises being broken. It can lead us to throw our hands up in despair and ask, "Is there *anyone* to whom I can really listen?"

And if we take an honest look at ourselves, we'd have to confess that we're not any better. How easy it is for us to "shade the truth" in order to make us look better. The child tells the parent just their side of the story, not mentioning the sins which they had committed which helped to lead up to the big fight. The boss asks us about our work, and we tell him only the parts which make us look good, kind of "failing to mention" those parts which would be considered failures. Or, perhaps we simply flat-out lie, for whatever reason.

That also leads us to throw up our hands in despair. We, who have been taught the truth, and admonished by God over and over again to speak the truth, how is it that we can be such failures in being truthful?!? How sinful we are! How much we deserve God's judgment!

The Israelites were reminded by God as to just how sinful they were when He appeared to them at Mt Sinai, which in our text is referred to as "Horeb." Remember, God had led the Israelites out of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea. He'd begun feeding them manna day-by-day, and miraculously brought water out of a rock for them. He led them to Mt. Sinai, where he wanted to formally enter into a covenant with the Israelites.

And what a remarkable day that was! Exodus 19 tells us, "**On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. {17} Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. {18} Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, {19} and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.**" (Exodus 19:16-19 NIV)

God then spoke the 10 commandments. Yes, God spoke so that the people could listen and even answer. Their answer to Moses? "**When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance {19} and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.'**" (Exodus 20:18-19 NIV) They recognized how sinful they were. They recognized that they deserved God's condemnation.

Now we come back to our text. God adds a detail here which isn't recorded in Exodus. God tells us that when the Israelites asked Moses to speak to God for them, that God responded, "**What they say is good.**" (Deuteronomy 18:17 NIV) Hmm. What they say is ... good? Yeah. Here's why.

They were recognizing that sinful human beings cannot stand in the presence of a Holy God on our own. We have no right, none at all.

So, what do we need? We need a go-between! Moses served that function at this time in the Israelites' history. He spoke to God on behalf of the people; he then was God's spokesman to the people.

But in so doing, Moses was serving as a picture of something far more important. Moses was serving as a picture of Jesus, THE prophet, THE go-between.

We have the same problem which those Israelites had; we're sinners. So, we have no right to stand in the presence of God. So, what do we need? We need a go-between, one who could stand in between us and God.

And Jesus does exactly that. Jesus did exactly what our text said he would do – He came from amongst the Israelites. He was one of their brothers, like our text said He would be. He did that so that He could do the ultimate "go-between" for us, so that He could go between God's wrath, and us. As God poured out his justice and hatred of sin, Jesus stood between us and God. HE went to the cross, HE suffered the full punishment which we deserved. HE paid for sins, in full, protecting us from God's wrath, taking God's full wrath upon Himself.

And, He continues to serve as that mediator today. Whenever we sin, it's Jesus who pleads our case: "I died to pay for that sin! I paid for it in full! It's been paid for!" His payment has been made in full; it continues to protect us from the wrath which we deserve. Jesus is that go-between, that mediator whom we need.

And that's why God says, "Listen to Him!" Listen to Jesus! Why so? Because He's worth listening to! The message which Jesus brings is the one and only message of eternal life! The truth that Jesus stepped into our shoes, took our punishment upon Himself, that is the ONLY message of salvation! That is the ONLY way to life eternal! And so God urges us, "Listen to Him!"

And we hang our heads in shame, don't we? Or at least, we ought to. How easy to push our Bibles to the side. How seemingly difficult it is to bring our kids to SS, to bring ourselves to SS. It seems like we have this little conversation about every six months or so, but I find it to be absolutely unbelievable that only about half of you will be (or "were") in SS today. You and I are the people of God! God has called us to faith! How possibly could we be so spiritually dull that we would fail to take advantage of the opportunities which we have to listen to Him? Or maybe it's not adult SS to which we ought to point. Perhaps it's to our devotional reading at home. How easy it is to let that Bible sit on the shelf. Isn't that crazy? The eternal God wants to talk to us! The eternal God wants to talk to us about how life works, about how He loves us, about life which is eternal, and we would keep the book closed? Are we completely daft?

God brings warning to those who refuse to listen to His words. He says, **"If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."** The Hebrew has the idea of God coming and chasing us down to bring us punishment. It's a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!

God speaks even more sharply about false prophets: **"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."** (Deut. 18:20 NIV) Wow! That's strong! Why does God speak so strongly!

It's because of the danger which a spiritual lie can bring to our eternal well-being. Every false teaching – even if it seems like it's small to us – ultimately leads us away from God, away from His Word, and most importantly, leads us away from Jesus.

Do we take that seriously? Do we recognize that those who teach anything contrary to the Word are in danger themselves? Do we recognize that those who worship other "gods" really are on the way to hell? Do we realize that there is horrible spiritual danger for us in any and every teaching which is contrary to the Word? Or do we kind of say, "Well, we're all Christians, and it's just a little difference of opinion." God seems to think quite differently! Do we?

Wow! How sinful we are! How much we need ... a go-between, someone who can stand between us and God's wrath! And thank God, you have exactly that! God DID raise up that prophet whom He promised. Jesus did come, did go to the cross for you, DID take the full price for your sins upon Himself. You're forgiven! God loves you now, and will love you forever!

And now His urging to you is simple: Listen! Listen to Jesus. And how do I do so? I open up the Bible, for it's in the Bible that our God speaks to us. It's through the Word that I hear about God's love, about the forgiveness of my sins, about the eternity which is mine. In the Word I hear TRUTH, and come to understand more and more fully how truth builds us up, and how error can and will hurt us. Listen!

And it only makes sense. We live in a world full of half-truth, shaded truths, and outright lies. But in Jesus we have one upon whom we can count! In Jesus we have one who's worth listening to! Listen, brothers and sisters, to Him! Amen.