

Sermon Transcript for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20, 2020

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right. So, we have in Deuteronomy that God will raise up a prophet like Moses. And this is really Jesus. When the people were later on in John's ministry, we're going to be talking about John a lot, but also how he points to Jesus. When they went to John, they asked if he was Elijah, they asked if he was the Christ, and they asked if he was the prophet, as if all three of these people were different individuals. Now, Elijah or what Elijah represented, John the Baptist indeed was that. A voice of one crying in the wilderness make straight the way of the Lord. And that is John. He is the forerunner of the Messiah, but the prophet and the Messiah, those are actually the same persons.

Now, the people didn't see that that way, or they didn't understand it because they didn't connect the two of them together, that this prophet and the Messiah would be one and the same. And the prophet is one who is like Moses, because he speaks directly to God, the Father, and then communicates that message directly to the people. He is that intermediary that allows us to hear the Word of God, and believe it through the power of the Holy Spirit. And so He is the new prophet, the ultimate prophet, because a prophet is one who speaks the Word of the Lord and Jesus Himself being the Word of the Lord is of course the ultimate prophet. And so this prophet who would speak for God to the people is Jesus Christ. And He would speak to everything that He is commanded of the Father. In other words, even in the Old Testament, it was stating that the prophet of God would never speak falsehood, would always speak the truth. So when He claims to be God Himself, that is the truth. Either that, or He's a liar or a lunatic. But He's neither. He is actually the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, and to be worshiped and praised, the Word of God. So we thank God for this coming of the new prophet, the ultimate prophet, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, if you notice when we get to Philippians, hopefully you'll recognize these words, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice. Let your reasonable-ness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand." Those were the first words of our Introit last week. And so here we have this tie -in and connection together with the whole season of Advent, and especially in this time of rejoicing. This is why we think of Advent, not just as a penitential season, one to reflect upon our need for the coming of the Messiah, but also a joyful celebration that He has come, that we know He has come. And that we know just as certain as His first coming, that He will come again. And we look in joyful anticipation to the day when He will come again to take us to be with Him in our glory.

Now, rejoice in the Lord, why? He says do not be anxious about anything, but with prayer and supplication and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and that the God of peace who surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Why do we rejoice? Because we don't need to be anxious. Why do we not need to be anxious? Because everything that we ask of God, when we ask according to His will and in His name, He hears us because He is the God of peace which surpasses all understanding. He knows our needs more than we do, and He promises to give us everything that we need to support this body and life. Now that does not mean that it's going to be an easy life. That may mean that we don't get everything that we want, but He promises He will be with us and give us all things needful. And most importantly, what that is, is to guard our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus. What we need is the assurance that God is for us and that He will not judge us as He's threatened at the end of Deuteronomy. If we do not listen to His words that He speaks, He Himself will require it of us. We will listen to everybody. We'll listen to the Word of God. We listen with joy and thanksgiving, that that Word has come to us and has forgiven us all of our sins, and has answered our prayers. Unfortunately, those who do not yet know Him will hear the Word at the end, and will tremble in fear because they realize that they have not listened nor obeyed the Word that God has proclaimed. And so our task, as John's, is to share that Word with all others around us, that they might know the grace, and mercy, and the peace of God, that He guards our hearts. That is the task at hand.

That is what we are called to do until He comes again so that His name might be glorified in all people's hearts and minds, and guarded by the presence of Jesus Christ.

So, that was John's message. And here we have the beginning of it even from the womb, John was proclaiming the glory of God, that this indeed was the Messiah. He leapt in his mother's womb. The presence of God was so powerful that the baby, the infant in the womb of Elizabeth recognized the presence of God because he was called to be the forerunner. And so he leapt for joy and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth was enabled to interpret this event, and explain exactly what happens. What an amazing testimony to the power of God that surpasses all understanding. How could Elizabeth understand what was going on in the mind of John who was in her womb? Only through the power of God. And yet through the power of God, she is able to very clearly state that this woman Mary is blessed among men and of all women because of the fruit of her womb, because of the child that is within her. Mary is blessed because she is the vessel through whom the Messiah enters into the human family. She is the one that gives Him the flesh and the blood of us, of all humanity that connects God with us. And so, yes, she is indeed blessed. And because she also her blood and her flesh, need the same righteousness and forgiveness that Jesus offers to everyone for she was born a sinner as well. And again, what a gracious God that even through a sinful human being, God can bring forth His salvation. Now, not to say that Mary was what we might look at and say, oh wow! She is a sinner. There's nothing dramatic in her life. She was probably a decent person and a good Jewish young lady following the laws and righteousness, but our activities don't fully explain our nature before God. We have inherited a sin that is deep within us. And even though Mary submitted to the will of God so graciously, let it be to me as you have said, she still was in need of the salvation that was offered through Jesus Christ. Now we don't have any record of anything that Mary did that we would deem sinful, although she was anxious and worried when Jesus was gone for three days in Jerusalem. And she didn't seem to understand what was going on. Also, when she goes to Jesus and says, they're out of wine at the feast at Cana, she doesn't seem to fully understand everything that is going on. That does not mean that she did not have faith in her Son and her God. It does not mean that she was beyond salvation. It just means she like us had the need of the righteousness of God to forgive her as He has forgiven us. And what a joy she recognized again through the power of the Holy Spirit, what God was doing for her and through her, she says that all generations will call her blessed. Not because she was holy and righteous, but because of her Son who would do great things and who would give mercy to generations, who recognized our humble estate and our need, and came to us in our hour of need and brought us hope. That hope in the assurance of the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, that guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. So let us with all confidence, knowing that God is our guard and our protector, and that we have His peace, let us rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, rejoice.

May His grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.