

Jesus Our Prophet

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Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[0 : 00] Well, I was just watching James as he was taking the collection.

It's a little bit off-putting to see death on his knuckles. And I've got to warn you, that was some permanent marker you put that on with. So in your pastoral calls this week, you might want to give a little warning as you're shaking hands with people.

We're going to talk about how Jesus has defeated death today. And what we're doing in these five weeks, we have a five-week break from 2 Samuel. And in these weeks, we're looking at how Jesus fulfills the things that we've been talking about in the Old Testament, the things that have gone on in 2 Samuel, God's work of salvation there, preparing the world for Jesus.

And during the next three weeks, we're going to look at how Jesus fulfills the roles that were very important in the kingdom of David, the kingdom of the house of Israel.

And these roles all had to do with mediation. There were three types of people that represented God to people and people to God.

[1 : 16] They were very important. And those three roles were prophets, priests, and kings. The prophets represented God to the people. And so people like Nathan, who told David about this kingdom one day being an everlasting kingdom, and also rebuking and correcting David a little bit later on in 2 Samuel, that was a prophet.

He spoke before the people about what God's words were. And the second office was priests. And the priests represented the people to God. And so, of course, the people could not come into the very presence of God.

There were people designated by the people of Israel to go in there, the priests. And they offered praises. They offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people to symbolically deal with the sins of that nation.

And they were people who had to represent God's people because of the glory of God, the power of God in coming into his presence.

And the third type of person was the king. And, of course, David was one of those. And they ruled as a representative of God to the people. And they were like under-shepherds, under-kings to God the great king.

[2 : 35] So, you see, those are all roles of mediation between God and his people. But they help us to understand Jesus. Last week at Easter, we had a joyous celebration because Jesus the Messiah, this anointed one, who suffered for us and for our sins as the great mediator, rose from the dead on the third day.

And this is what we celebrate most in the Christian life and year. In that resurrection, Jesus shows that he is God, king of kings, lord of lords, as we sang out at the end of our service last week.

And the wonder of this, the beauty of this, is that in Jesus, the mediator is God himself. So the representatives that are between God and his people are lifted away.

There's no need for it because God comes in to be the mediator himself. In his great love for us, he comes to us, he takes away everything that separates us from God, and Jesus brings us into the very presence of God forever.

And that is the great and precious gift of knowing God and being loved by him forever. And he gives us that great and precious gift in Jesus Christ that can never be taken away.

[4 : 02] And that's why the joy that Christians have is a joy that is a constant through every kind of situation that one can go through. The very, very difficult and dark times in life, as well as the times of great joy and celebration, there is a permanent joy that fills you because of the work of Jesus Christ as our mediator.

And so it's important for us to look at how Jesus does that. And so over the next three Sundays, we're going to look at the three offices of Jesus, and we're going to see how he fulfills them and how he is much greater than those offices of the kingdom of Israel.

But they're helpful for us in understanding. So let's look at Jesus, our prophet today. You know, often we think of prophets as people who tell the future. But in the Bible, prophet simply means someone who stands before and speaks.

That's literally what prophet means, to speak before. And so prophets would speak God's words to the people that were given to them.

Now, Jesus is much greater than the prophets. In fact, he's never actually called a prophet in the Bible. People who misunderstand him call him a prophet.

[5 : 22] They think, well, he's the prophet who was to come. He's Elijah and so forth. And of course, in Islam, we see that Jesus is called a prophet. But Jesus is far greater than that.

The prophets of the Old Testament always began their speaking by saying, thus says the Lord, and that they would accurately go on to say what God had told them. Jesus never says that.

He always says, truly, truly, I say to you. And what he's saying is that God himself is speaking. That he is God.

That he is one who is representing God to the people as God himself. They are coming into his presence and hearing him. And this is the great gift for us as Christians.

I wonder if you just look at the front cover of the bulletin. And I put there, reading from Hebrews 1, 1 through 4, because the three offices of Christ are shown here. Prophet, priest, and king.

[6 : 21] And you see the prophet right at the beginning. Long ago at many times in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by a son, in a much greater way in other words, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

It's an amazing thing. It is telling us that God himself comes to be our prophet. And you know that this meets the great need that we have as humans.

I believe that the central need that we have is to hear from one who is greater than us. To have someone speak to us and tell us what the meaning of our life is.

To tell us what the meaning of this world is, where it is going. To tell us who God is as well. And who we are ourselves. The wonderful thing about the God of the Bible is that he is a God who speaks.

It is a striking feature of the God of Israel and the God that is Jesus Christ. That he speaks throughout the Bible.

[7 : 35] And the Bible is God's word to us. He begins right at the very beginning by saying, let there be light. He speaks to creation. And God speaks and everything comes into existence.

And then when man and woman are created, right at the beginning, he blesses them. He speaks to them a blessing. And he tells them what his will is for them. And he has conversation with them.

Now the Bible has this picture of walking in the stillness in the garden. There is a sense of being in constant communion, conversation with the living God. And that is disrupted in the fall.

The talking is broken. God who creates the world, speaks the world, he blesses the world, and then he comes into the sinful world and speaks to us as well.

And all of us today here, no matter where we are in our faith, new to knowing God or having known God for a long time in Jesus, all of us need to hear from God.

[8 : 40] Because he is the one who made us, who made the world, whose plans are in his hands. Now I have a little son, Nicholas, who is six years old.

And this week he was visited by a friend who moved away at the beginning of the school year. It was hard for him. They were kindred spirits. They were inseparable.

Big hugs every time they saw each other in school. They had known each other since preschool. And so they had a great time connecting this week because he had moved far away, his friend.

A few days later, this little boy and his mom came and dropped off a card for Nicholas, which was quite wonderful. Very loving card. But Nicholas wasn't there.

I took it and I said I would deliver it when Nicholas got back. And so when he got back, I showed him the card. He was very excited about this message from his friend.

[9 : 35] And on this card, it said it had a couple of houses on it, a couple of suns. It had green circles. We weren't sure what they were. There was some blue dashes.

We didn't know for sure what those were either. There was a person. We didn't know for sure who the person was either. And we were talking about that. It said have a happy day. It said love, will at the bottom. And it was a wonderful, gracious gift.

And I said to Nicholas, what do you think those things are? Who is that person? Why are there two houses? Why are there two suns? What is this all about? What is that thing in the corner? And he said, I don't know.

I don't know. I don't know. And I said, well, what are we going to do? He said, well, I'm going to need to talk to him. And I said, that's right. We need to actually talk to the author of this card to understand it.

And I think that that is a picture of what we need from God. God has made this picture of our life. He is the author of life. And we need to hear from him to understand it, to see what it means to be in that picture together.

[10 : 45] This is what Acts 3 is about. Peter is saying, the author of life is speaking to you. And if you remember what happens, and turn to 911.

It's easy to remember. That's the number you call for help. Page 911, Acts 3, verse 11. And what has happened so far in that is that this man in the temple had been begging for alms.

And Peter and John walk by and say, we don't have any money. And the guy probably thought, I've heard that before. And he said, but what I do have, I'll give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk.

And immediately, his ankles and his feet were strengthened. And he was able to walk around. Not only did he do that, but in the temple there, he leaped and he praised God at the top of his voice and ran around.

He was not the first Anglican, apparently. He created a scene. And people came running from all over the temple to see what was going on.

[11 : 46] And they recognized this man who had been lame from birth. And as he was clinging to Peter and John, the people are astounded. They're all surrounding them. And Peter takes that opportunity to preach this wonderful sermon that we heard read about Jesus being the author of life.

And he tells them this. He says, men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Why do you stare? In verse 12 at the bottom, as though by our own power or piety, we have made him walk. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of our fathers, glorified his servant, Jesus, whom you delivered and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him.

But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

And he tells the crowd that because he is the author of life, because he has been glorified by God himself, because Jesus has been raised from the dead, that there needs to be a response.

[13 : 06] And that's down in verse 19. It's a very active response that Peter calls for. He says, repent, therefore, and turn again.

That is listening. That is active listening. It is actually submitting to what Jesus is saying and who he is as well.

It is actively turning to him. And Peter's saying, that is the only response that can be made to the author of life. It is to hear from him with humility.

And Peter drives home that importance of obeying Jesus' words in verse 22. Because down there, he reminds the people of Israel who are there crowding around him, who knew about Moses.

He reminds them of Moses' words. He says, the Lord God will raise up for you. This is what Moses said. He will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. And you shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

[14 : 07] And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. You see, driving home the need to listen.

And you know that the Jewish people considered Moses to be the greatest figure of the Old Testament. He is at the top of the list. And the reason for it is not only because he is a prophet, but also because he is the mediator of the covenant.

The relationship that God set up with his people. Moses brought that to the people of God after hearing from it in the glory of God. And that covenant was very simple.

That Israel would be God's special possession. And it would be a possession that would mean that Israel is a kingdom of priests to God.

That Israel would be a holy nation. That God would protect Israel. And not only that, God would treat Israel with grace and mercy and forgive her sins.

[15 : 08] So this is for the covenant that Moses brought that they would be God's possession. And God would be their God. And clearly Peter is saying here that Jesus is that person that Moses had said God would raise up who is like him.

Because Jesus is the one who speaks for God and also mediates this new covenant that is brought about his blood by his blood shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

so that all who trust in him would become God's special treasured possession. Part of a holy nation. A royal priesthood.

People who are forgiven by God and understand that God's grace and mercy has been poured out on them. That is what Jesus has done as not only the prophet but the mediator of the covenant.

And that's such a blessing that down in verse 26 Peter says this. He says God has raised up that servant his servant. It's Jesus. And he has sent him to you the people of Israel first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

[16 : 18] This is the power of Jesus as that kind of prophet. Now there's a challenge that Peter makes to them in this. And that is that they would change their verdict of Jesus.

Instead of cursing him and killing him he is saying repent understand that he is your greatest blessing the one that God has sent to answer all of the promises of God.

God blesses you in Jesus. Turn to him listen to him obey him and you will know the blessing of God. And you know I think this is something that is a message for us as well.

We don't kill the God we don't kill Jesus who God raised from the dead but it is very easy to ignore him to live as though that he is not the prophet who has come into the world the one who speaks for God and gives us this covenant of grace and goodness.

It is very easy to live lives without reference to him at all. Peter is calling us to repent to come back to him to know him as the author of our life and to depend on him for that life as well.

[17 : 29] There is a great urgency in Peter's voice here. And part of the reason for that and maybe it is all of the reason is because of his experience with Jesus on the mountain.

And we heard Tim read that in our first reading from Mark. In that reading James and John together with Peter go up to the mountain with Jesus and there Jesus is transfigured in the presence of Moses and Elijah the great prophets from the Old Testament.

Peter sees the glory of Jesus Christ. And it's amazing because Moses and Elijah also saw God's glory on a high mountain. And in the Old Testament the glory of God is always shown as being a bright brilliant shiny feature.

And Peter uses the same language to describe the change in Jesus. It's a whiteness that nothing on earth can compare to he says. And according to Peter it was very good and very terrifying at the same time to see Jesus' glory unveiled to him for that short time.

And if there was any doubt whose glory Jesus has God speaks out of a cloud just as he did with Moses in an audible voice and he says what?

[18 : 48] This is my beloved son listen to him listen to him and suddenly they are alone with the author of life.

And you see this is what life is about. It is about hearing from that author of life. God himself says this is the one to listen to.

That's what it means that Jesus is our prophet. And God's words here are not just for Peter and James and John. They are for each of us. God's voice tells us that Jesus' voice has the greatest authority.

It is God's own voice. He has the words of eternal life. What you do with his words are absolutely crucial. And you know Peter says this as well. Look back at verse 19 and 20.

He talks about how crucial it is. He says to listen to him means refreshment of your spirit a new born again spirit. It means sins blotted out, completely wiped away everything that keeps us from God.

[19 : 53] This is the blessing of listening. But to not listen is in verse 23. Literally to not listen to Jesus the prophet is soul destroying.

And so Peter is saying it is absolutely crucial. It's the most important decision you make. Will you listen to the voice of Jesus Christ? And those words for us, whether we're very new to our faith or have been a Christian for a long time, Jesus says build your life on the bedrock that won't be shaken when you hear and obey his words.

Build your life on that. Jesus in a sense is our architect. He knows what we were made for. He knows how we were made to relate to God and with people around us.

Jesus is the author of our lives who speaks continually here in the Bible. What a gift. Jesus says if you build your life on my words, you'll be like a solid house on a solid foundation that nothing will be able to shake you.

No storm of life will shake you from that. And this is the gift of listening to God's word. Now I went to a very secular large university in my undergraduate years.

[21 : 11] And in that university there was a large lecture hall. Largest building on the campus seated about 5,000 people. It was an iconic building with big huge pillars, very impressive and on the facade above it there was carved into stone these words, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

Now you may know that those are the words from Jesus from John 8 32. And it's strange that a secular university would put them up there. And the fact of the matter is they took it completely out of context.

I'm very glad I didn't take any Bible classes there. They didn't offer any. But because Jesus' words are changed here in their meaning. The university meant them to mean that if you have an education at our institution you will be freed from ignorance is the idea.

But those words don't mean much without the verse that is before. And I thought it would be great to do some creative graffiti in that lecture hall and to carve just above it the verse that goes just before it.

Verse 31. And then it makes things clear. It says, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

[22 : 34] And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. You see what Jesus is saying. He says that true freedom comes from abiding in his word, listening to them, submitting to them, living in those words constantly, actively listening to them.

It is a freedom that comes because you are following into the ways of the author of your life. And that brings true freedom. Remember what we prayed this morning, the service of God is perfect freedom.

And that's very different from the freedom we value in our culture, which is a freedom to be autonomous, to not have to obey anything except for our own instincts, what we feel.

But C.S. Lewis wrote, he says, telling us to obey instinct is a lot like telling us to obey people. People say different things and so do instincts. Our instincts are at war.

Each instinct, if you listen to it, will claim to be gratified at the expense of the rest. And that makes sense because God has given to us his ways.

[23 : 41] And instincts that we have are not really freedom. It's an enslavement to competing desires. The people who are listening to Jesus say those words really speak for our culture when they said, look, Jesus, we've never been enslaved to anyone.

How is it that you say you will become free? But Jesus answered them and said, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. And here's where our instincts come in.

The slave does not remain in the house forever, the son remains forever. So, if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

And you see, Jesus is saying that you and I all submit to something in our lives. It might be a philosophy we have learned or our own desires or materialism or even our family, but Jesus says you are a slave to something.

And without God in the picture, you are enslaved to things that oppose God. But Jesus says, if you are to be truly free, submit to the son who is the author of your life and abide in him, and God will set you free.

[24 : 56] And that's why it's good to end this sermon about listening to the words of the prophet Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Because notice here that Jesus doesn't say, you will free yourself if you listen to God's word, if you listen to Jesus speak.

He is saying the son will set you free. In other words, God in his power changes you. He works in you. He brings about his good purposes in your life.

And it is very, very good. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would become, and he called him, what? the helper. The one, as he said, who would convict our hearts, who will teach you all things, bring you to remembrance all that I have said to you.

You see, Jesus' words have the power of the Holy Spirit in them. His word and the Holy Spirit are never separated. God in his power works through those words.

And so the Holy Spirit personally teaches us. He personally strengthens us to obey. He gives us joy in obeying. He pours love into our hearts so that we might love God and love those who are around us.

[26 : 11] It is God's grace being poured into us by the Holy Spirit. And this is why we listen and obey to God's word. It is a joy because of what God has done for us in the risen Lord Jesus, blessing us and working through us.

So we end by thinking and knowing and remembering that God says, listen to Jesus. Read, mark, inwardly digest his words, submit to those words, let them correct you, encourage you, comfort you, fill you with hope.

It's one of the reasons we come together today. Jesus becomes fuzzy if we don't meet and hear him and we don't read on our own during the week. Things in this world cloud who he is for us.

And we need to hear God's very powerful voice from that mountaintop again. This is my beloved son. Listen to him. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you because you speak to us. We thank you for the gift of Jesus' words. We thank you that he is the word and that you tell us who we are, who you are.

[27 : 32] You bring us into relationship with you through the words. And most of all, we thank you for the gift of being able to love Jesus by listening to his words. Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Thank you for the gift of your love poured into our hearts. And we pray your Holy Spirit to work in power in our lives that we would submit to Jesus' words and be freed by them.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Please kneel for prayer.

God, Most High, Father, the author of life and the author of beauty and the author of beautiful spring days like yesterday, days that dispel the grey of winter.

We thank you for spring's limited warmth that transitions us towards summer. And in the same way, we thank you for your grace that transforms our lives now and points us towards the glories of you in heaven.

[28 : 55] thank you for hope. Tangible hope as in the onset of spring and the intangible hope of transforming grace that is nevertheless your reality.

And as we basked in yesterday's glorious warmth, help us to live our lives so that others may bask in the reflected warmth of your love and grace in us.

And so seek you out and find salvation. Lord, in your mercy. Amen. God of our salvation, help us take the lessons we learned in church to heart.

We fear temptation and the slavery of sin. help us to learn that we become the most vulnerable to your wily enemy who looks everywhere waiting to strike when things look good.

Father, help us to deal with the many, many temptations to take our eyes from you and succumb to the cleverness of evil.

[30 : 13] Help us to recognize its many formats and disguises and help us particularly when it comes in the audacious masquerade of the angel of light and we do right deeds for wrong reasons.

Father, we ask, we ask desperately, keep us safe from evil, keep us safe from ourselves. Lord, in your mercy.

Amen. In the same way, we ask for all our brothers and sisters who need healing and or sustenance. We pray for those who have chosen to take this Sunday off and not fellowship with us today.

We trust them to you, our Lord, our Good Shepherd. Search out the weak and comfort them. And we especially pray for those who cannot be here this morning because of family circumstances or old age and its many problems or sickness.

And thus, we ask your special blessing on Derek, Rowena, Chris, Brian, Janet, Marguerite, Susan, and, in this moment of silence, others that we know and that you have put on our hearts.

[31 : 37] We ask as well for our missionaries, Catherine Grenette of the North American Indigenous Missionaries, Sharon Thompson of the Whitcliffe Bible Translators, and Brian McConachie of Ratanuck.

In the same way, we pray for two of our sister churches in Ontario, St Paul's Anglican Bible Church in Stony Creek, and St Peter by the Park in Oakville.

Be with all of them as they share the incredible news of the resurrection of Jesus and what it means for every single person, past, present, future.

And now, Father, as we transition into the reality of the coming week, we ask again to be a mirror of your grace. We ask that we will show others the joy of serving you, that our lips may be like perfectly tuned musical instruments sounding out your praise.

Help us learn the happy art of looking after things temporal while our minds and souls remain fixed on things eternal.

[33 : 01] help us to walk as Jesus walked, our only saviour and our only perfect model. All glory and honour be to you, our God, our heavenly Father, who rejoices in us.

All glory and honour be to you, our precious Lord Jesus, who loves us so dearly, and as well to our Holy Spirit, who works within us, preparing us for eternal joy.

Thank you for our salvation. Thank you for our redemption. Thank you for love. In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayers.

Amen.