

## With Prophets of God

Advent Midweek #2 – 12/07/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 1:54-55, 68-72 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 69-70, [Zechariah proclaimed,] “[God] has raised up a horn of salvation for us...as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old”.

### Introduction

- ✘ One of the beauties of the season of Advent is that, through its Scripture Readings and hymns, it unfolds the revelation of Christ and develops our thanksgiving for Jesus as He comes to save us and promises to return as the righteous judge.
  - ➔ Tonight we continue our sermon series called *Prepare the Way* with a special emphasis on doing so *With Prophets of God*.
- ✘ At Christmas God’s messengers bring news of a Savior who has come to deliver us from all of our enemies.
  - ➔ Imagine for a moment though, “What if it were different?” What horror it would be if the news were instead of a Judge who had come to bring on us the full weight of God’s wrath, damnation, and hellfire!
- ✘ But that’s not the case. Instead, He sends us tidings of great joy, not wrath; of peace and goodwill. The angels sing with joy because God Himself is filled with joy at all that He promises and all that He does for us.
  - ➔ Months before the Christmas angels gave the news, the blessed virgin Mary said, “God spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever” (v. 55). So also Zechariah, the priest said, God “spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old”.
- ✘ So what was the message that prompted Mary to say in her famous song that we now call the Magnificat, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Lk. 1:46-47)?
  - ➔ And in Zechariah’s song, that Christians now call the Benedictus – the song that we just finished singing – he proclaimed, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people” (v.68).
- ✘ What was the message? Mary says it is, “...in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers”, while Zechariah says it is “as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets”.
  - ➔ Well, let’s begin with the prophets who prepare the way of the coming Lord; as they encourage us along the way today. Yes, we can rejoice at the same message and the same fact all these years later; that God keeps His Word throughout the centuries since creation so that in each and every age it is still God’s holy and perfect Word!

### I. Who are God’s Prophets?

- ✘ It makes sense of us to start out with this question, “Who are God’s Prophets?” Alexander Cruden explained the word “Prophets” in his 1737 *Concordance*, “Ordinarily this word is understood as meaning one who foretells future events. It meant, at the time our English Bible was translated, also a preacher – and prophesying meant preaching. A meaning of the word less often recognized, but really as common, is one who tells or a forth-teller – who speaks for another, most usually for God. It is in this sense that many Bible characters are called prophets, as, for example, Aaron, Moses, and Jesus Christ.”
  - ➔ So prophets are preachers; those who proclaim the word of another. Prophets speak, not for themselves, but on behalf of their master. God told Moses, “Aaron shall be your prophet” (Ex.

7:1). So Aaron spoke for Moses who admitted that he was “slow of speech and of tongue” (Ex. 4:10).

- ✘ Yet Moses still was himself a real prophet, for he gave God’s words in laws and rules to God’s people. He was God’s mouthpiece. In our Old Testament Reading tonight he conveys God’s own definition of a prophet and prophecy, saying in part, “I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command Him” (Deut. 18:18).

→ There were many prophets that met that criterion, yet one special Prophet; a Prophet above all other prophets was expected. Psalm 110:4 says that Christ is “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”. He is our High Priest, and is Himself also the last sacrifice. And all of Christ’s believers under Him are what 1 Peter 2:9 calls the new “priesthood of believers”.

- ✘ Hebrews 7:12 says that “when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well”. For example, the sacrificial laws were changed. Jesus was now God’s Lamb to be sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. The earlier Law was necessary, but when new revelations came through Jesus Christ, John 1:17 tells us things were now different: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”. You see, the new Prophet, Jesus, was no destroyer of the Law. Neither was He a clone of Moses to teach the Law. Jesus came to fulfill the Law in our stead – because we could not do it in our sin.

→ Like Moses, Jesus spoke in God’s name. He said of Himself in Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon Me, because Yahweh has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound”. That was Jesus’ task.

→ As the new Prophet He also taught what God the Father revealed. What He had Himself seen the Father do, or what He heard, He repeated. Whoever despises or rejects Him despises and rejects the Father who sent Him. All living souls should honor Jesus just as they are to honor the Father. All that He says of Himself; or His purpose, and of His sacrifice is true – fully supported by the writings of the Law, Prophets, and Psalms and by His signs. Why? As Matthew 9:6 says, “...that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth...”.

→ Countless false prophets may come and pretend that they are Christ, but every one of them can be tested against God’s Word and be proven false.

## II. We See Christ as the True Prophet

- ✘ That’s the real question asked when Jesus came, and it is still asked by a growing number today, “Was Jesus just one in a long line of equal, or even less important prophets, as the Muslim faith declares?”

→ The simple answer is, “No!” He was much more than a prophet. Was He just another king? Not another king, but the King above all kings; the King of kings! Was He another holy man, as countless religious bodies have declared and still declare today? No! He is the holiest; none could, or can ever accuse Him of committing even one sin!

- ✘ When Jesus was rejected by His own family; by those in the community that He grew up, He told the people, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown”.

→ Yet, there were many in response to His inspired insight, healings, miracles, and speeches who acknowledged Him to be a great prophet – for example, the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:19); the healed blind man who told the Pharisees, “He is a prophet” (Jn. 9:17); even the paranoid and evil King, Herod suspected that Jesus was John or a prophet come back to life (Lk. 9:7-9).

→ After 5,000 people were fed to the full because of Jesus’ miracle, John 6:14 says the crowd declared, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” And both Peter (Acts 3:22-

23) and Stephen (Acts 7:37) applied Moses' words in our Old Testament Reading to Jesus in the book of Acts.

- ✘ So yes, my friends, the evidence of history and Scripture is overwhelming, so much so that a person has to work harder at rejecting Jesus than if they just let God's Word have its way with them. So with great joy you and I describe Jesus as the Way, and we hold His words from Mark 10:33-34 in faith: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise."

### III. Other Prophets Predict the Christ.

- ✘ Of course there are many more prophets than the ones we've mentioned thus far, from all walks of life: women like Deborah (Jdg. 4:4), priests like Aaron (Ex. 7:1), kings like David (Acts 2:30), farmers like Amos (Amos 7:14-15). Some wrote books at God's command like Jeremiah. Jeremiah 30:1-2 says, "The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh: 'Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you'." Others, like Elijah wrote no books but their work is recorded for our learning (1 Kings 17ff.).
  - ➔ Whatever the case, God was not timid or unclear when He wanted His prophets to convey His message. Amos says, "The Lord Yahweh does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).
- ✘ Finally, the most important confirmation of how important the prophets' words are regarding the Christ comes from Jesus Himself. On the afternoon of His resurrection Jesus walked with the disciples going to Emmaus, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk. 24:27). And after "their eyes were opened...they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?'" (Lk. 24:31-32)

### Conclusion

- ✘ I hope that by now you are beginning to see how important the words of all the prophets really are in confirming Jesus and His coming. Extensive lists can be made of all the prophecies regarding the Christ and how they are fulfilled in His coming and His work.
  - ➔ But when you boil them all down, they serve one unifying purpose; a purpose that directly affects each and every one of us in this room personally.
- ✘ It is this, as the closing words of John's Gospel so eloquently states it, "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (Jn. 20:31).
  - ➔ Yes, we in the church are founded on the apostles and prophets. And what they preached and taught and recorded for us in Holy Scripture is Christ, the Cornerstone on whom our faith rests today and forevermore.
- ✘ So, as we *Prepare the Way* for Jesus this year Paul puts our priorities in the proper perspective. He advised the Christians in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus, the Christ". Amen.