

TEXT: Luke 13:31-35 THEME: Jesus—The Prophet

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Luke 13:31-35). *NIV*

Dear Fellow-Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb:

Under our Lenten theme of *"Jesus—Name Above Every Name,"* we have pondered Jesus—the Son of God and Jesus—the Christ or Messiah. Christ or Messiah means "the Anointed One." We mentioned last week that three offices in the Old Testament were entered into by anointing—and each of these offices foreshadowed the one great Anointed One, the Messiah. These three offices were prophet, priest and king. Today, ***"JESUS—THE PROPHET."***

So what comes into your head when you hear the name "prophet?" Maybe you think of a stern, fusty, bearded old man wagging a scolding finger at the wayward people of God in the Old Testament. Maybe you have in your head images of Moses who was in a category all by himself—talking with God as a man talks with his friend, says the Bible. Or Elijah, in black camel's hair and workman's belt, facing down Ahab and Jezebel in their throne-room, and then clobbering the forces of evil in a fiery showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

If you're a confirmation student, the word prophet brings to mind the major prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, or the harder to memorize minor prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

But these guys are all more than mere names too. Isaiah is the Gospel-preacher—the evangelist of the Old Testament. It is Isaiah who foretold, **"The virgin will be with Child and will give birth to a Son and will call Him Immanuel," (Isaiah 7:14)** and **"To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."** (Isaiah 9:6). It is Isaiah who, 700 years before Christ, speaks as though he is standing at the very foot of the cross: **"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."** (Isaiah 53:4,5).

Jeremiah spoke of the Lord our righteousness and the Branch. But he also spoke of Israel as a donkey in heat, cheating on God. Hosea was ordered by God to marry a hooker to illustrate the theme of God as jilted lover. Amos was a shepherd and a farmer with no college degree, but his inspired eloquence soars: **“Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (5:4)**. Jonah was a reluctant prophet. He was actually afraid the heathen people of Nineveh would repent and so be spared by God. And so they did—and so they were. Micah said things like: **“But you Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (5:2)** and **“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (6:8)**. Malachi portrayed the coming of Christ as a refiner’s fire.

None of the prophets minced words. They were not tea-sipping clergy in turned-about collars engaged in parlor talk. Most of them didn’t want the job when God called them to do it. Moses said, “Get someone else to do it.” Isaiah said, **“I am a man of unclean lips.” (6:5)**. Jeremiah complained he was just a babe in the woods. All of them knew they would not be well-received.

So comes the holy sarcasm of Christ, our great Prophet, when He says, **“Surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”** The people of Israel rebelled against Moses more than once. Elijah had a contract put out on his life by Queen Jezebel. Most Bible scholars think that Isaiah was sawn in two. Jeremiah was thrown into an empty cistern, sunk up to his waste in the mire—and the king burned his writings, slice by slice. Another prophet named Zechariah was slain within the temple courts. The holy writer of 2 Chronicles summed it up this way: **“The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.” (36:15,16)**.

So now what do you think of when you hear the name “prophet?” You may think of their unconventional style, their way of preaching with raw images of spiritual whoredom, with some verses you may not expect to see printed in synod magazines—much too outspoken and impolite for good church-going folks! You may think of the sacrifices they made, the sufferings they endured, the deaths they died for having the courage to confront princes, priests and peasants with the plain word of God.

But this above all about the prophets—and especially about Jesus the Prophet—ought to stick with us. Their job was to speak the word of God. Yes, sometimes they spoke the word of God concerning future events. Sometimes they aimed the word of God at the dark past. Often they applied the word of God to the present—to the moment where they found themselves. But first and always, they spoke the word of God. They comforted the afflicted. They afflicted the comfortable. They held up the mirror of the law to show folks their need of a Savior. They held up the torch of the Gospel—the Good News of One coming who would forgive their sins. But always the word. This is the heart of the prophetic office.

And what name does the apostle John give to Jesus? **“In the beginning was the Word.” (John 1:1).** Jesus—the Prophet! He is God’s last word and explanation of himself. **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,”** said Jesus (John 14:9). **“If you hold to my teaching,”** said Jesus, **“you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (8:31,32).**

Some people, perhaps even some among our Trinity family, say that they are Christians, say that they believe in Jesus as their Savior, say that they are children of God, but if they do not regularly hear the Word of God, do not read the Word of God, do not study the Word of God, do not obey the Word of God, they are liars—most of all to themselves. It is a myth to think that you can know Jesus, have a relationship with Jesus, call Jesus Lord and Savior, apart from what Jesus said, apart from the word of Jesus.

Still today, by his grace, he gives us sinners, you and me, a part in his prophetic office. He sends us out with his word, to make disciples, to baptize, to teach everything he has commanded. Wherever and whenever the word is preached, Jesus the Prophet still stands before us, risking our apathy, our boredom, our rejection—a risk of love he is willing to take on you and me. Through the power of the Word of God, let us not disappoint our one and only Savior from sin, Jesus—The Prophet. Amen.