

Scripture Readings and Sermon

January 31, 2021 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Deuteronomy 18:15-20 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Towards the end of Deuteronomy, Moses addresses issues the people of Israel will face without him. Since Moses acted as the primary interpreter of God's Word as seen in the story of the Ten Commandments, new interpreters needed to be selected. Chapter 18 begins with a warning not to trust those who use divination or magical techniques. Moses then says, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet". The prophet's words and authority comes from God and not a hereditary line like the priesthood. If someone chooses to assume that authority and "speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak-- that prophet shall die." Later examples of a prophet show that God's word is not only spoken verbally but at times lived out in the life of the prophet. This leads to some extraordinary behavior by the prophet in order to get the people's attention and demonstrate the futility of their actions.

Deuteronomy 18:15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet"

Do we still have prophets today? That you trust?

Do you agree with the old saying, "When the student is ready, a teacher will come"?

Could it be we are not ready to hear God's truth?

Where do you turn to hear God's word?

Commentary on Mark 1:21-28 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The Greek word used for "authority" is associated with jurisdiction and legal as well as divine power. Jesus was not interpreting the word of God like the scribes but seemed to be speaking the Word like a prophet. Jesus spoke the Word of God with the authority of God. This authority comes from the fact that "the Kingdom of God is near". In the midst of the synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit calls Jesus the "Holy One of God". It is first interesting to not that he is in the synagogue. This is a place of learning but not necessarily a place of righteousness. The term "Holy One" is first used in Numbers 16:7 when Moses says, "the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one." This was in response to the priesthood claiming holiness because of their position. Moses makes it clear that God declares who is holy. In the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:2, she says, "There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." The title Holy One is associated with God and latter in Isaiah with God's chosen one, "your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 41:14) Jesus' authority comes from his relationship with the Father as the Holy One both chosen by God and God in the Trinity.

Mark 1:22 "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

What is the difference between "authority" and the scribes?

In a world of 'false news', who speaks with authority to you?

Does this authority come from a title or from a sense of authenticity?

Do we speak with authority when we speak from the heart and from experience?

Could the difference be that instead of teaching the word, Jesus was the living Word?

Commentary on 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

Once Paul successfully argued against the legalism found in the current Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament Law, he was faced with an evolving Christian hedonism in which everything became acceptable. Paul turns to the Spirit of love as the standard that would restore order to the Christian community. This could easily be illustrated in the use of food in the community. By removing the

Law, all food was now "clean" and could be eaten. This, however, caused a number of problems. There was still a large number of Jews in the Christian communities even in Greece and Rome. They had a difficult time sharing a meal with people who were eating unclean animals. In addition to this, some of the food that was being cooked may have been donated by a servant or slave whose master had used the food as a sacrificial offering to the household god. Knowing that there is no god but God and not wanting to waste the food, there are records of this becoming a growing problem in Corinth. Paul's solution was to focus on the law of love for "love builds up". Paul warns not to "become a stumbling block to the weak" by using food that may be offensive to fellow Christians. For, "when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ." The issue for Paul is no longer about legalism but about love uniting the Christian body.

1 Corinthians 8:1 Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Does a knowledge of the Bible also mean the person has a living faith?

Have you ever seen or experienced someone use their knowledge to tear down rather than build up?

When has the "good news" been used to condemn and judge (which belongs to God)?

If God is love than what is more important, Biblical knowledge or a compassionate life?

Does a focus on love mean that we ignore study or does it drive us to study more?

Sermon **"Know Who is Calling"** ([*Sermon Video*](#))

The call of God is God's word proclaimed through word and action upon our hearts. The one who proclaims this word according to scripture is the prophet. While Webster may define one meaning of prophecy as "a prediction of something to come", this is not biblical prophecy. Only God knows how the future will unfold. Prophecy often contains the promises of God but the exact manner those promises are fulfilled is a mystery only God knows. The practice of prediction is called divination and is rejected in scripture as humanities attempt to control. Prophecy according to scripture is a word from the Lord to an individual or community which brings either comfort and promise or judgment and repentance.

The prophet, according to Deuteronomy, is selected by God to speak on God's behalf. Since the prophet speaks for God, any words which represent human will or worldly idols will lead to the prophet's damnation (eternal death). This judgment, however, passes to the listener if the prophet faithfully proclaims the Lord's word and the listener rejects that word. Being literally God's living Word, Jesus is the anointed prophet of God, the Messiah. As a prophet, he speaks with the authority of God both to people and to spirits. It was this authority that amazed and frightened the people on that day in Capernaum recorded in Mark.

We know it is God who is calling through the words of a prophet when those words speak directly to our soul. As the Psalmist says, "Deep calls to deep" (42:7). This word is always spoken in love but may not bring comfort. When our soul is broken, worn, and wound, the word of God heals with comfort and promise. But when we have built a wall of pride and arrogance around our souls, that same word may tear down those walls bringing humility and vulnerability. Like a parent who seeks only the best for their children, their love both corrects and encourages. True prophecy always builds up the image of God in all God's children calling them back to who they were created to be. This may mean casting out unclean spirits as well as acts of tender compassion.

The one who calls us is God. That truest call came in the person of Jesus Christ. We are witnesses to the power and authority his words have to bring restoration and wholeness to our lives. This is the good news that we have been given to share with all who long for the Word of God. May God use us as prophets so that more can be brought to the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.