

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
February 1, 2015**

**Deut. 18:15-20
The Voice that Matters**

**Hymns: 82 – 91 – Distribution: 94 – 315
Closing: 316**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." ¹⁷ The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. ²⁰ But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death." Deuteronomy 18:15-20

What do you want to hear? Because whatever it is that you want to hear, I'm sure you can find someone that is saying it. We live in a world today where seemingly everyone has something to say, and a channel through which to say it. If you so desired, each one of you could start an internet blog that could be accessed around the globe; you could make a Facebook post that could reach into cyberspace; you could compose a tweet that would instantly be accessible to a potential audience of millions. And on the receiving end, you, yourself, right now in your pocket or purse, have access to an endless source of voices that are eagerly and feverishly sharing their opinions, their advice, and their beliefs.

As I think about that endless source of voices, my mind goes to a verse from 2 Timothy 4; it speaks about people, in attempts at suiting their own desires, gathering around them people who say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). I don't

know that the apostle Paul, as he wrote by inspiration from God, could ever imagine how true his words would be in our digital information age. A person can quickly find other people to tell them just what they want to hear, no matter what it is.

So, what do you want to hear? Because I'm sure you can find someone that is saying it.

Certainly, as the apostle Paul warned, that affects us in the church. Want to be persuaded that God's message was meant to change and adapt? You can find someone who can "prove" just that. Want to be convinced that the story of Creation is just that, a fictional story? You can find someone that will give you the "facts". Want to be assured that the way that you are living is okay, and there is no reason to struggle against that temptation? You can find someone that will give you "assurance" that God wants you to do whatever makes you happy.

It is a dangerous world that we live in, and the temptation to turn from the truth becomes more difficult to battle as the voices that speak to our itching ears grow louder and more accessible and more numerous. There are literally a million voices in your ears, there are probably more in the ears of each generation behind you. Each of those voices has a message to give, each voice has an opinion to share, each voice has an influence.

How crucial it is in this world of voices to remember and know that there is only one voice that comes from God Almighty. God tells us in Deuteronomy 18:18 about the voice that comes from him: ***"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."***

As the people of Israel prepared for life after Moses, their great leader, God knew that the people would be wondering who would speak to them, and who they should listen to. So, God told them very clearly. Listen to the voice of the Prophet that will come after Moses; listen to the voice of the Prophet that will be greater than Moses. Listen to this prophet, because, first of all, he will have my words in his mouth.

In addition to that positive encouragement to listen to the voice of the Prophet because his words would be God's words, God also gave two strong warnings. First, he said, ***"If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account"*** (Deut. 18:19). God knew that the people of Israel would be filled with doubts and uncertainties; God knew that their ears would be itching for answers; God knew that there would be many voices used by Satan to turn them from God. With this first warning, God was telling the people, "Don't let this voice get drowned out by

the other voices that will be calling to you.” If they did, there would be consequences – accountability to God.

Then he gave a second warning, ***“But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death” (Deut. 18:20).*** Because God knew that his Word would not always be popular and would not always be the message that people wanted to hear, he knew that there would be people who would want to change the message. So, with his second warning, God was telling the people, “Don’t let this voice be corrupted.” If it was, there would again be consequences – death.

Now the grave warnings and the severe consequences that God gave to protect the Word of his Prophet were for the Old Testament people, but the lesson that God was giving remains just as applicable for us today. Amidst all the voices that bend our ear and fight for our attention, there is only one voice that matters.

That is the voice that we heard in the Gospel from Mark 1. The only voice that matters is the voice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was sent to speak the words of God. That this voice mattered is seen in the response that the people gave in Mark 1:27-28. With their words of response, they showed why Jesus’s words mattered then and still matter today.

Jesus’ voice matters first of all, because his is the voice of authority. As we live in a world where everyone thinks that their opinion is the one that matters, that their opinion is the one that sets the truth, the reality is that Jesus is the only person who has ever spoken in this earth with the authority that comes from speaking as almighty God.

The people also found value in the voice of Jesus because he spoke a new teaching. He did not hesitate to tell people that their lives were filled with sins that had consequences. We are told that his message was, “Repent!” But Jesus also delivered a new answer for the people.

He told them that there was nothing that they could do on their own. The people didn’t need to satisfy God’s justice with sacrifices, they didn’t need to win God’s approval with perfection, they didn’t need to earn God’s favor with dedication. They simply had to look to Jesus who would be perfect for them. They had to look to Jesus, who would sacrifice for them; they had to look to Jesus, who gave them the answer.

And what was different about Jesus’ teaching back then makes it foreign still today. That man doesn’t actually have the answers is offensive to many and ignorant to others, but that proclamation is what continues to make Jesus’ voice different. Jesus

offers something when he speaks that no one else in this world can offer: a way to access God’s love and forgiveness without any works or cost or conditions. Jesus’ voice matters because he still gives a teaching that is new to so many ears in this world.

That means that Jesus’ voice still needs to be heard in the world. When the people in Mark 1 heard Jesus’ voice, they spread the news quickly about him. They realized that this voice that we’re hearing was one that mattered and that it is one that needed to be heard. That fact remains true still today. In a world where everyone wants their voice to be heard, and where people have an endless array of voices to listen to, this truth remains for each of us in this world: There is only one voice that matters. It is the voice of our Savior Jesus.

May we listen to that voice with clarity and conviction, and may we tune others into this voice that desperately needs to be heard. Amen.