

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2015**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 297, 293, 294, 364, 532.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 18:1-19, Romans 16:17-18, John 6:1-17.

Sermon Text: John 6:14-15.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Did you notice from our Gospel lesson why people were following Jesus? *“A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.”* (John 6:2)

John then reports another miracle – the feeding of what scripture calls 5000 men. And then we read *“After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”* (John 6:14)

But Jesus realized that his mission, his work, did not match what the people wanted.

Today there are many who want a “Jesus Christ” who is something different than what he really is, who is someone different than what the Word of God tells plainly what Jesus is.

So today we ask

**WHAT KIND OF PROPHET IS JESUS TO YOU?**

1. Many people in Jesus’ day expected something different than what he is.
2. Many people today do not want the real “Jesus-prophet” of the Holy Scriptures.

*“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”*

They called him “prophet”. In fact, they called him *“the Prophet who is to come into the world.”* And we read in Mark 6:15: *“Others said, ‘He is Elijah.’ And still others claimed, ‘He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.’”* In fact, on one occasion after Jesus had raised the only son of a woman from the dead we read *“They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’”* (Luke 7:16)

Even his disciples, including the ones on the road to Emmaus after he rose from the dead spoke of him in this way: *“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people”* (Luke 24:19) and they still didn’t completely understand his mission and work.

In our Old Testament lesson you heard how the people who lived near the chosen people of God listened to all kinds of people – false prophets – who found their source of teaching everywhere but the Word of God. Then Moses assures God’s people that *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”* (Deuteronomy 18:15) While we could say that many humans spoke the Word of the Lord – just think of all the prophetic books of the Old Testament – there is only one who fits the role of the prophet. Matthew tells us *“the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”* (Matthew 7:28-29)

Even disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus *“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”* Jesus’ answer was that they should *“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”* (Matthew 11:3-5)

He preached the Word of God, and that is what a true prophet is and does. No one could preach the Word of God any better or more truthfully or more accurately than God himself.

The Word of God tells us a great deal about prophets. Prophet is one role Jesus came to fulfill. Lutherans have spoken and written of his three-fold “office” as “Prophet, Priest, and King”.

The Old Testament Prophets were anointed to tell people God’s Word, especially the good news about the coming Savior.

As a Prophet – the Great Prophet – Jesus preached God’s Word, especially the good news of eternal life. Scripture repeatedly tells us of this work: *“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.”* (Luke 8:1) When Jesus asked his disciples if they, too, wanted to leave him, we read in John 6:68: *“Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’”*

But we must remember that he also came to be a Priest, the Great High Priest.

The Old Testament priests were anointed to represent the people before God and to offer sacrifices for the people’s sins.

As the Great High Priest, Jesus represented the whole world before God and sacrificed himself for the sins of all. This we call his vicarious atonement. This was perhaps the most important part of his three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. His work of redemption is centered in this office of Priest. We confess in the words of Luther which you memorized “he has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.”

At the time of our sermon text, his sacrifice is in the future. That sacrifice would culminate on the cross on Calvary, dying for all men. Even now, his interceding with God for us, for all sinners, that is, for all men, continues at the right hand of God the Father in heaven.

In the Old Testament, Kings were anointed to rule the people and protect them.

As the right kind of king, Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and the devil so that he might rule in the hearts of believers by his Word.

Jesus withdrew from the people because he did not want to be, he could not be the kind of prophet or king they wanted him to be.

The people saw his power in the miracles he performed. They had seen the power his words had, words which healed and fed people and made their life on earth easier – through his miracles. If they had a king – a bread-king – they wouldn’t ever have to work for their “daily bread”. After all, God had miraculously provided “daily bread” in the form of manna, quail, and water for their ancestors many generations earlier in the wilderness before they came to the promised land. Why wouldn’t God do it now, through “the prophet” foretold in their sacred scriptures who now had come into their midst! So John tells us *“that they intended to come and make him king by force.”* So the people are offering basically the same temptations of earthly power that Satan had used to tempt Jesus in the wilderness shortly after his baptism. They missed the real sign in Jesus’ miracle, namely, that he was the promised Christ of God sent to bring them spiritual bread.

Many thought that this was the beginning of earthly abundance which they mistakenly believed that God’s prophets had foretold. They were looking at this world, not the life of the world to come.

But he does not want to be, he cannot be the kind of king or prophet they want. He does not want to be made an earthly king. He will only be the right kind of king, and only in his right time.

So in his day people expected something different than what he is. They expected a different kind of “prophet”.

In addition, *“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”* He did not want people to make him a king, for the kind of king they wanted was the wrong kind of king. Jesus is the kind of king who rules in people’s hearts. His kingdom is not of this world. He told Pontius Pilate, as we hear in our reading of the Passion history, *“My kingdom is not of this world. If it*

*were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."* (John 18:36) He had previously told his disciples: *"the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17:21)

People today do not want the real Jesus-prophet of the Holy Scriptures.

There are many people in the midst of Christendom whose ideas concerning Christ are just as hazy and wrong as were those of the Jews on this occasion. It is only by continual study of the Bible that a full and clear understanding of the person and office of Jesus may be gained.

People today by nature reject what God says in his Word and if they don't simply refuse to hear it, they add to it, they subtract from it, and they twist what God says so that they can hear what they want to hear. We are clearly living in the times foretold by Scripture as Paul wrote to Timothy: *"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."* (2 Timothy 4:3 NIV)

God sternly warns us early in the Bible, in the book of Deuteronomy *"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you."* (Deuteronomy 4:2) He repeats that right at the very end of the Bible *"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."* (Revelation 22:18-19)

Many people don't come to church to hear the Word of God. They don't teach their children what the Bible teaches. They don't read Holy Scripture, but they read everything else, and give greater weight to what they read and hear from sources other than from God himself in his Holy Word. They take great pleasure in listening to false prophets, even on television, on the radio, and in reading what false prophets write without weighing and comparing and testing it carefully against what God says in the Bible. Some people claiming to be Christians make excuses saying they go to heterodox churches "just to hear the sermon" or "just to hear the music" thinking that they can sort out the false from the true, although they have forgotten the simple Word of God they learned as children in their solid, Bible-based Catechism Instruction. They think it is perfectly acceptable to place themselves at the feet of false teachers, thinking, like the bold Peter, that they will never deny Jesus. But that is not what God wants, warns against, and commands. We are to *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."* (Matthew 7:15)

And what about today? What about us? What kind of prophet is Jesus to you?

Have we been misled by the false prophets who look at the earthly blessings God provided in the Scriptures and think that God will give us grand and abundant earthly blessings, too? God may provide such blessings. But he may also keep us humble, relying on him totally and completely for our "daily bread". We need not seek to live lives of poverty and hardship, but if God permits it to come upon us, we must remember that he is our heavenly king, ruling in our hearts now so that we will be blessed with life forever in heaven.

So there is a warning for us, too, in Jesus' actions on this day. Yes, you want Jesus to be your king. Yes, you want him to be the correct kind of king. But you must look to the Scriptures to learn and remember what kind of Prophet and King he is.

Lord, please be unto us the right kind of prophet and king! Amen.