

“Be Raised Up”
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
4th Sunday After Epiphany
January 28, 2018
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 (NRSV) A New Prophet Like Moses

¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet^[a] like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.^[b] ¹⁶ This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: “If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.” ¹⁷ Then the LORD replied to me: “They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet^[c] like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet,^[d] who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹ Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet^[e] shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰ But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.”

Is there a prophet in our midst?

As Gretchen read, Moses said to the Hebrews:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. (Deut 18:15)

Let’s start with a review history lesson.

The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Old Testament.

It is also the fifth and final book of what our Jewish family calls the Torah; and biblical scholars call the Pentateuch (the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.)

Torah is Hebrew for “instruction” or “teaching.”

And Pentateuch’s suffix, “penta,” means five.

Coming back to you from your confirmation class?

Those five books of our Bible are where Jewish laws and customs can be found. And they also contain the telling of The People of God’s story from creation up to the death of Moses.

Do you remember the beginning of Moses’ story?

- His mom was from the Levite tribe and when the pharaoh was determined to murder toddler boys, his mom put him in a basket in the Nile river.

- Pharaoh's daughter rescued him and raised him as her own son, with all the privileges of royalty.
- When Moses grew to manhood, God appeared to him in a burning bush; Moses then led God's people out of slavery in Egypt and was given the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

All of this happened in the book of Exodus (the second book of the Bible), but Moses' narrative is actually much longer.

The chronicle of Moses' life and ministry continues through the next three books of the bible, and end up where we came in; where our reading comes from; at the end of the Pentateuch - after the giving of the Law, the telling of Creation, and of God's first covenants with us.

Moses' life is almost over. He died shortly after the time of these verses, soon after he gave his final blessing to Israel at the end of the book of Deuteronomy.

So, back to my original question: *Is there a prophet in our midst?*

Moses knew his life was growing short, so he assured the Hebrew people that they would not be left alone; that even after **HE** was gone, God would make sure that there was a prophet in their midst.

And, in doing so, I think, Moses was also assuring the generations of people that would come after him (including us;) with whom God would also be in covenant – that THEY'D never be alone.

This isn't just a promise God made THEN, it continues TODAY!

That we'll never be left alone.

That we'll always have a guide.

God promises (that's an active verb) that He'll raise up prophets among us.

Over time, God has sure filled that promise.

Historically, saints before us have had prophetic impact on the world.

Sometimes, against all odds, they've risen into leadership, spoken out about injustice and prayed for peace.

Moses' words have come true: God has sent prophets to His people.

But here's what I don't want us to overlook TODAY!

It says:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.”

God promised guidance when Moses was gone AND THAT that leader would rise up from among them.

That promise STILL HOLDS TRUE!

The covenant, the promise, God made when Moses was dying, was with people of every generation.

But most precious (to me) is that God wasn't going to have to always send a “higher someone” down to earth!

INSTEAD God would **empower the people** THAT'S US - who are already here to do the work that needed to be done.

He would raise up for you a prophet like Moses, from among YOU, THE PEOPLE.

Do you know what this means?

There's a prophet in our midst!

And while I bring you a message every Sunday – IT IS NOT NECESSARILY ME!

That'd make a not so great sermon.

It's YOU!

It's **YOUR** abilities and spirit gifts, that EVERY ONE of you has, to be a leader in this church.

In your families.

In the neighborhood and the world.

I'm not just suggesting....I'm telling you that God is calling you IN ALL THE WAYS God CREATED in you, to rise up and make a difference.

Scripture affirms that God will call a prophet into every generation – that's the covenant/promise in today's reading.

And that's **NOT JUST** people in “card-carryin'” ministry or people who are prophetic in public settings.

I think these verses are talkin' about US - ordinary folks, who God is calling to rise up to do extraordinary things.

This is some powerful stuff.

ARE YOU HEARING IT? (Like last week's message when I asked, “Can you hear me now?”)

Now, don't EVEN think that because we're CALLED, empowered and SENT that we have to have a project or a ministry like Old Moses had.

Or maybe we are!

Maybe we are the prophets of our generation that will lead the entire generation of "slaves out of sin" and into the "Promised Land"; the land of God's promises where hope and grace and love flow like milk and honey.

Moses was an ordinary man; a lowly, bottom of the social ladder, shepherd (remember them from Advent?) until God appeared to him.

And then it was clear (*well, after Moses chose to*) that Moses rose up to God's call and did extraordinary things that not only changed **his** life, but also changed the lives of others for all future generations!

Dear Ones, WE'RE CALLED to rise up, TOO.

Jesus said, in last week's Scripture reading: "Follow me."

Hello??

Listen! And rise up to that call.

As children of God and people of faith we are called by scripture to heed that call.

But how?

How will we do it?

Today's psalm reading, which we used part of in the Call to Worship, tells us how to start.

With praising God!

*"Praise the LORD! (the psalm says)
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation."*

We can praise God in our lives.

We're told by the psalmist to do it in the company of others.

In a world that's far from perfect, we are called to look around and make the invisible signs of God's grace VERY VISIBLE FOR OTHERS; to inspire and comfort; to protect and encourage; and to love others.

PROPHETS: We're called to show the ways God is working NOT just in our lives, but in theirs, too! In big **and** small ways.

We are called to show proof (even when we have to struggle to find it sometimes) of God's faithfulness in everything.

The rest of the reading from Deuteronomy urges us to take this seriously. It says:
"Any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name words that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die. (v.20)

How's that for fire and brimstone?

Pretty serious, huh....something for us to think about.

'Cause too often we have "other gods" – money, possessions, our jobs that take over.

We're to remember that "God" is all we're supposed to say and do.

Are we the "gospel" to AND FOR everyone we meet?

It shouldn't be difficult.

I'm not talking about standing on the corner to preach to whoever walks by; (like the guy who thought there were going to be "strings attached" to the cookies we were GIVING him.)

I'm talking about just giving thanks to God every day...

...to remember God in all that we say and all that we do.

I'm talking about ACCEPTING your God-given courage to talk about the ways that God is working in YOUR life; to show others how important your faith is to you.

The psalmist tells us to praise God because God is faithful and just...

...to praise God because God is powerful and redeems us...

...and because God's covenant with us is everlasting.

We are called to be a living expression of that good news in our lives OUT THERE!
It's news worth sharing.

In a world where the morning paper and the evening news are filled with the MESS of things we can't control, **we do have the power** to proclaim something that is good and faithful and everlasting.

We, the "who am I to be able to do THAT" ordinary people with ordinary lives have the power to do extraordinary things.

Yes, US, Prophets!

We have the power to live God's call for us in our lives just like Moses did...and just like Moses wrote.

He put, in ever-lasting Scripture, God's promise that we **would. BE. raised. up.**

Thanks be to God!

Amen!

Hymn for Going Forth: "*Lord, Speak to Me*" v. 1, 4, & 5

UMH #463

Benediction:

Believe this.

Believe you are who God says you are.

Believe you are who God created you to be.

Believe you are who God is calling you to be.

And be raised up.