

## (Seminarian Adam Lambrecht) Deuteronomy 18:15-20

### “This Is Jesus: Fulfiller of Scripture”

Each and every day, we are the recipients of millions—maybe even billions—of messages. That’s not to say we receive a million voicemails or a billion texts each day (although for some it may feel that way). It’s simply to say that the world we live in is communicating with us through a series of messages. And those messages come to us in many different ways. The alarm that that blares and tells your body (and hopefully) your brain to wake up. The news headlines that pop up on your phone or scroll across your watch face. The calendar reminders, the Facebook messages, the work emails. The “check engine” warning light. The billboard across the street. And the ads—oh my goodness, the ads. Buy this. Do this. Buy that. Listen to him. Buy this too. Vote for her. Buy it all. Have it all.

When you sit back and think about it, the sheer volume of messages can be downright overwhelming. Millions—billions—of messages, each one scratching and clawing for some of your attention. Each one pushed as “necessary”—information you can’t live without. *You gotta try this new recipe! You gotta download this app! You gotta see this slideshow of kitty pictures! You gotta hear what this expert has to say!*

In such a world, it can be a challenge for us to keep our heads on straight, to focus our attention on where it needs to be. So it might seem like the last thing we need is another message calling out, *You gotta hear this!* But that’s exactly what God says in his Word to us. Only this message is different than the millions of others you are exposed to each day. You gotta hear this, because this message is God’s Word, the way he brings his salvation to you.

God’s Word for us this morning comes from the book of Deuteronomy, which, in many ways, is like Moses’ farewell speech to the Israelites. By this time, Moses is an old man. He had lived a long, full life. Think of all he had seen and experienced. He grew up in the palaces of Egypt. He watched God send the plagues and part the waters of the Red Sea. He spoke with God personally on Mt. Sinai. He led the Israelites to the brink of the Promised Land, only to watch them lose trust and crumble beneath fear and doubt. Moses, too, wandered with his people in the wilderness for 40 years. And so now, as he’s about to die, Moses conveys God’s promise to his people.

**“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. 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’” (Dt. 18:15-16).**

Moses reflected on that day at Horeb—at Mt. Sinai—when God came to his people in an awesome display of thunder and lightning and smoke and fire. The whole mountain shook, the sky grew dark, a loud trumpet sounded...and then...the Almighty God spoke to his people. In Exodus, Moses records what God says: **“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me”** (Ex. 20:2-3).

The holy, Almighty God demanded recognition as the one, true God. He demanded perfect obedience. There was a reason God told Moses beforehand that there should be limits and boundaries around the mountain—limits which no one could cross and boundaries which no one could touch. Because God wanted it to be absolutely clear that he alone was God. He wanted them to understand his own power and perfection, and also to recognize that they were *not* perfect or powerful.

And God also gave his people 10 Commandments which they were to follow and obey. God wanted his people to turn away from any other thoughts or messages they might receive and obey his commands. But the point, from the moment he first gave them, was not to turn the Israelites inward, thinking that by doing the right things they would somehow be able to climb the mountain to God and be on equal footing with him. The point was always that they couldn't. The point was that, by nature, they didn't know God's perfect Word and will. The point was always about turning the Israelites away from themselves...and towards God himself, who had already chosen them, protected them, freed them from slavery, and brought them to hear his Word.

And so, when the people respond in fear, saying, **“Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die”** (Dt. 18:16), God says, **“What they say is good”** (Dt. 18:17). God wanted them to understand that he was holy and perfect, and that he demanded obedience. And God needed them to understand that failure to obey him, failure to trust in him as the one true God meant certain death. They could not be on equal standing with him. They needed him.

And he was absolutely a God that they could depend on. Because when God came to his people, he also reminded them of his grace. Even his name was a reminder of that. Moses tells the people that this is **“the LORD your God”** (Dt. 18:15). The God who spoke to them and demanded obedience is also the God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He is the God who revealed himself as the I AM, the absolutely independent and unequivocally gracious God, who simply chose to come and help his people. He is the God who promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would have a homeland in Canaan. He is the God who heard his people suffering in Egypt, led them over dry ground at the Red Sea, and brought them to the edge of the Promised Land. And he is the God who guided and protected his people in the wilderness, even when they grumbled and complained and disobeyed. This is their God.

And this God has a promise for his people.

**“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”** (Dt. 18:18-20).

This was not a new promise. It had been passed down from generation to generation. It had been repeated to God’s people from the time God first made it in the Garden of Eden, promising a “seed” from Eve who would crush the serpent’s work. It was echoed to Abraham, who as an old man watched God work a miracle in his barren wife and bring about a son whose birth would preserve the line of the Savior. And it was pictured beautifully in the blood that spattered the door frames of Israel’s houses on their last night in Egypt. God wants his people to be absolutely clear about the greatest message there is—“a Savior is coming who will speak my Word and take away your sin.” God will raise up a prophet for his people—one who is both true God and true man.

But this promise is not just for the people of Israel or the people gathered around Moses as he gives his farewell speech. It is for you!

Do you remember where you were about five weeks ago today? It was a Sunday morning, so many of you were probably right here in this building. About five weeks ago today, you received another important message. *You gotta hear this*, a man named Isaiah said as he told you that a virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and call him Immanuel—God With Us. *You gotta hear this*, the prophet Micah said, as he reminded you that a ruler over Israel would come from a tiny town in Judah—Bethlehem. *You gotta hear this*, said John, who told you that God’s Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The baby whose birth you celebrated five weeks ago is the prophet that God raises up for his people. God puts his words into the mouth of the Word Made Flesh. This is your Prophet.

And God demands the same obedience to the Word Made Flesh. **“You must listen to him...If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account”** (Dt. 18:15, 19). God knows his people. He knew that Israel needed to be reminded of their spiritual ignorance and sin. And he knows that you and I need the same reminder. He knows how by nature we do not know God; how just like the people of Israel we carry around the guilt and rebellion passed down to us from Adam and Eve; how we blindly assume that we can simply climb up the mountain to God; how even when we see God’s power and hear his voice we still only respond in fear. And so God gives us his Word through his prophet, to wake us up and turn us to him.

And God knows the arrogance of our sinful nature, too. He knows how we like to tune in to other messages instead—messages that don’t require the time commitment like worship and Bible Study, or messages that don’t makes us feel as uncomfortable as God’s law (do

this, do that). He knows how our sinful nature likes to change or twist God's Word. *Yeah, I know God says to love my enemies and forgive those who hurt me...but that's only if they're really, really sorry for what they've done.* God knows how our sinful nature latches on to other gods, refusing to let go, elevating my job, my possessions, my friends, my entertainment, my self...above God and his Word.

Our ignorance and arrogance demands an accounting. **“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”** (Dt. 18:20). God calls us to account for our failures to listen, for our sinful speaking beyond what God says, and for our selfish obsessions with other gods, whatever they may be. And the verdict is: guilty. The sentence is: death. Like the people of Israel, we have no choice but to cry out, **“Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die”** (Dt. 18:16).

But God's message does not end there. *You gotta hear this*, because God has a solution to this monumental problem.

**“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”** (Dt. 18:18-20).

God raises up a prophet for his people. The Prophet listens perfectly to his Father's will. He speaks perfectly in his Father's name. He obeys perfectly all his Father's commands. And yet, when the final accounting is made, God declares him guilty. Because this prophet takes on our ignorant fears and arrogant failures. And God sentences him to death on a cross for these fears and failures that had been heaped on his shoulders. *You gotta hear this*: the man hanging on the cross, crying out **“Father, forgive them”** (Lk. 23:34) is The Prophet—Jesus—who lives and dies for you.

And because he lived and died, you now stand before God free from the sin that once bound you. You have no guilt in life, and no fear in death. God's prophet speaks the message of forgiveness directly to you. Gone are the limits and boundaries around God's holy mountain. You are clothed in Christ, eager to meet your God face to face. God's prophet speaks the message of eternal life in heaven directly to you.

Gone, too, are the fear and trembling that once made you cry out **“Let us not hear the voice of the LORD”** (Dt. 18:16). Because now you can't get enough of it. You can't get enough of hearing that you are chosen, forgiven, redeemed. You can't get enough of tasting your forgiveness at Lord's Supper. You can't get enough of reading your devotions, studying your Bible, and gathering to praise the God who saves you.

And you can't get enough, either, of finding ways to live your faith joyfully. You hear God's call to help, and so you give food and clothing and money to people who need it. You hear his call to encourage, and so you cry with those who mourn, you embrace those who

are lonely, you listen to those in despair. You hear God's call to work, and so you go to school, you do your job, and you make others' jobs easier. You hear his call to pray, and so you pray for those who have hurt you, for those you disagree with, and for those who make your life difficult. You hear God's call to serve, and so you help your neighbor fix his sink, you volunteer for the school board, you clean up after your sister.

And you speak God's Word faithfully. You echo the Prophet's words, reminding sinners of their need for a Savior, calling them to confess, urging them to come and hear the beautiful message of forgiveness. You speak what the Prophet speaks, telling others that God doesn't promise a life of luxury or a life free from difficulty. But he promises eternal life through his Son. You say what God commands you to say to your neighbors and to your community: *You gotta hear this!* God so loved YOU that he has raised up a Prophet for YOU, and YOU have life in him. Amen.