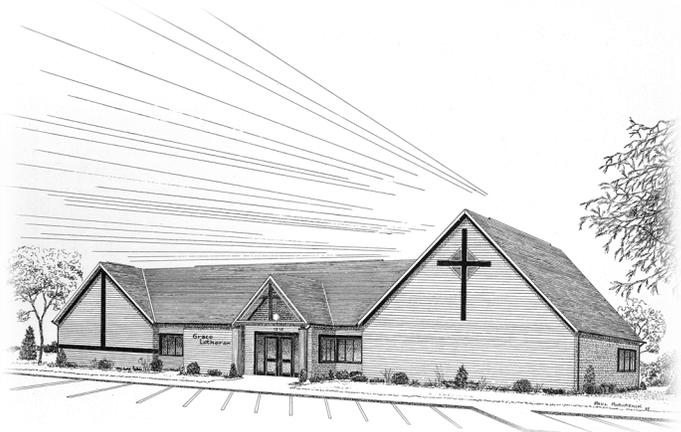


Midweek Advent 1
December 2, 2020
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Deuteronomy 18:18-19

THREEFOLD OFFICES OF CHRIST: PROPHET



This year for our midweek Advent series we're going to review one of those basic Catechism facets about Christ that you may have learned many years ago. It's the breakdown of what we call Christ's office, or offices. You know, just the term office itself probably requires some explanation today. When you

hear the word *office*, what comes to your mind? Perhaps it's a four-walled room where certain business is done. Maybe it's where you work. It could certainly be a place. Your pastor has an office. It's where you might go if you have a doctrinal question or if you would like some spiritual counseling or if you're looking for the Lord's Supper to be privately administered. There are of course some very famous offices that are immediately recognizable. The oval office is the place where the President of the United States conducts business. It is where his work is done. But an office can be much more than a place. The oval office can mean the entire presidential party that does business. You might speak of the word that comes out of the oval office. You almost assign a personality to the office. The same is true when we refer to the Vatican. It is a representation of the official capacity of the pope. The office speaks for the person who holds that office. It can also be a job title. It describes what the person does. The one who holds the office of doctor or physician looks after people's health. The one who holds the office of professor teaches students at the university level. Office can really mean many things.

In the case of Jesus' office, we give him a three-fold office or job description. It describes the titles that he holds, his positions of authority. It also describes the work which he does. It also helps us consider where that work takes place. But these offices are not just some clever way of speaking about Jesus that the Church made up over the years. No, these offices are ancient. They have been held by many others in a representative way, but can ultimately only be truly fulfilled by Jesus. They also had been foretold by prophecies for centuries before Jesus himself held them here on earth.

Today we want to consider Jesus' office of **Prophet**. This office describes Jesus' work of proclaiming God's Word. It means that he has the authority to speak for God. And it takes place wherever God's Word is proclaimed.

This office was prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:18-19, where God told the children of Israel through Moses, *"I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them everything that I command him. Anyone who will not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."* This prophecy of Jesus' office is interesting because you get to hear God fulfilling the work of the office even as it's being proclaimed. A prophet is anyone who speaks God's Word to God's people. God was performing that work through the prophet Moses. He was considered to be the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. In this way, he was also a type of Christ. He was a type of Jesus' office of prophet. Jesus came to proclaim God's Word to God's people. That meant that he had the authority to speak on behalf of God, just like Moses did. It was a very high

responsibility. And God even likens Jesus, the ultimate prophet, to Moses when he says, *"I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like you."* Moses is the type for Jesus' office of prophet.

But why did Jesus need to fulfill this work? Why do we need someone to speak on behalf of God to us? Well, Adam and Eve didn't need that originally. They automatically knew exactly what God wanted. They didn't need to be told a thousand times like we do. They perfectly obeyed God's will. But then, when sin entered the world, mankind no longer knew and understood God's will perfectly on their own. This is why Jesus needed to fulfill the office of **Prophet**. And it wasn't just that he fulfilled that office in his own day. He fulfilled it through Moses, when Moses showed creation just how bad it was in failing to keep God's holy law. All the prophets of the Old Testament fulfilled that role to a lesser extent as well. But if God had not revealed his Word to us through this work of prophecy, we would never know how bad we were. We would never really know the depth of our sin and how thorough its corruption is. We would never know the fullest extent of the punishment that we deserve. Unless God had told us, we would not really know that we deserve hell for our rebellion and disobedience. We know from our conscience that we don't measure up to God's standard, but we wouldn't know just how far humanity had fallen if God had not told us about it through prophecy.

John the Baptist, whose announcement we heard this evening, would function the same way. As Gabriel said in that text, *"He will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God" (Lk 1:16)*. John did that through his preaching of law and gospel, through his preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That was the character and nature of his proclamation. But ultimately, we needed Jesus to fulfill this work for us completely. All John could do was point to Jesus and say, *"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29)*. All John could do was prepare the people with the message that said, *"The kingdom of heaven is near."* The ultimate proclamation of forgiveness could come only through Jesus our Prophet.

You see, that's what Jesus came to proclaim. He

came to bespeak us righteous. He came to speak the words, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 24)*. Jesus came to declare over so many whom he healed, *"Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven" (Lk)*. Jesus came to declare to the people of God, to his disciples, that the glory of God had come to set his people free and loose them from their bondage to sin. Jesus came as the prophet to forgive the world.

And Jesus still functions that way today. Every time his Word is proclaimed in its truth and purity, there is Jesus our Prophet who speaks and proclaims forgiveness to God's people. Wherever the Sacraments are administered, there is Jesus as Prophet fulfilling God's promises to his people and connecting his people to the cross through baptism, to the death and resurrection which He Himself accomplished for us. There he is at the altar to give us his very body and blood to eat and to drink so that we can hear the Word Jesus speaks through his representatives that our sins are forgiven.

Jesus does much work for us. His three-fold offices give us unique insights into how Jesus serves God's people of old just as he serves us today. God's holy name be praised as he continues to speak God's Word to God's people as our Prophet long-foretold. Amen.

