

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

52 – Jesus as Prophet

Announcements:

1/4 @7:00 -

Prayer

1/5 @6:30 -

Grace Group

1/8 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: Are you a procrastinator or someone who does everything early?

READ: Matthew 17:1-8

As you may (or may not) know, I spent the week before Christmas finishing up the final paper for my class. The full name of the class was “Systematic Theology II: Soteriology, Christology and Eschatology”, so obviously it was super fun and interesting (and I don’t mean that as sarcastically as it may sound!). For my paper I needed to write on any topic covered in the class, so I chose a Christological topic and wrote on what is commonly known as the threefold office. In particular, I looked at the role of Jesus as Prophet. But as is usually the case, I really don’t want these papers and things to just be for the pointless accumulation of more knowledge for myself, and wanted to share some of what I learned with you all, and this passage, it turns out, is the perfect way to do that!

As you read this passage and think of “prophet” for most of us we hone in directly on Elijah, but one of the most important passages about Jesus being a prophet comes directly from Moses. In Deuteronomy 18:17-18 Moses writes: “*And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’*” There is about a paper’s worth of things we could take from this... but important to note for us here are two things. One, A prophet is one who will “speak to them all that [God] commanded him. Thus we see truly what a prophet does. It is not some fancy future predicting or just hellfire and brimstone talking, it is their job to really the words of God to the people. This leads us to see the second thought, that God will raise up a prophet like Moses. Once we understand the job of prophets as something like “telling the people what God has said” we can see why Moses would be considered the greatest prophet ever. For he didn’t just give people some of the words of God, he gave them his very law! He told the people what God expected of them, and what benefits and curses there would be for ignoring those commands. Thus Moses looks forward to another prophet that will teach the people all the things of God, who would reveal what is needed for life and service to him. To shortcut a bit just know this, that prophet was Jesus (see Acts 3:22).

DISCUSS: Why is it important that we understand the job of prophet as “speaking the words of God”? How does knowing that Jesus is a prophet like Moses help us understand his role in the world (and in our lives)?

But Jesus doesn't just meet with Moses, Elijah is also there. As was noted on Sunday, Elijah serves the role of being the “stereotypical” prophet. Whereas Moses is given the specific “prophecy” of the Law, Elijah is the picture of all the other types of prophecy that we see in Scripture. And even here, we can understand and see clearly the role of Jesus as a prophet. For he performed many mighty deeds (like Jesus); He called out the “religious” people who were truly far from God (like Jesus); He experienced trials and troubles for his ministry yet still followed what God had called him to do (you get the point here). In theological language we would say that Elijah is a “type” of Christ. His life, his actions, his teachings, these all show us in shadows and pictures what Jesus would be like. Yet all types fall short of showing us the full picture of what they are a picture of, like copies of copies they are imperfect and should make us desire ever more to see the “original”

DISCUSS: Why is it so important to understand the idea of “type”? Can you think of any other “types” of Christ? Why are these important?

To end, I would like to share what I wrote as the conclusion to my paper: When properly understood the role of Christ as prophet becomes foundational to a proper Christology. However there is a temptation to allow that role to exist, yet never speak to one's heart and soul. The danger here is that one could become like the people noted in Matthew 16. Though they rightly saw that Christ was a prophet, this view was “superficial and fickle.”

In order to avoid this, the words of John Flavel on the subject are of immanent importance. “[Christ’s] prophetic office consists of two parts. The first is external, consisting of His true and full revelation of the will of God to man. The second is internal, consisting of His illumination of the mind and inclination of the heart to receive and embrace His revelation.” While this first sort of illumination has been the larger focus of this paper, in seeing how as the prophet *par excellence* Jesus reveals God and himself to his people, and his teaching with his authority becomes the rule of life, this second part of the office of Prophet cannot be overlooked. For the believer, it is not just that Jesus is the prophet that speaks to the heart, it is that he does so in an intimate and personal manner. Much like David had a prophet (Nathan) that spoke to him directly, convicting his heart, teaching him and showing him where he had gone astray, so too the believer has a prophet (Jesus) who speaks to his or her heart, and empowers them to “receive and embrace His revelation.” In this sense it is a personal revelation, a unique-to-each-believer sort of prophetic work that enlivens and redeems. Because he is the prophet *par excellence* he can bring conviction and life in a way that no other prophet can; because his role is the consummation of all other prophets the message he brings is superior. In fact it is the message that contains “things into which angels long to look.” (1 Peter 1:12). This is why the church must proclaim Christ as prophet, for it is in his prophetic role that he calls sinners to repent and believe in his name.

DISCUSS: Why is this second internal work of Prophet so important? How can we be more aware of him working in this way?