

Fr. Curtis Miller     January 30-31, 2021     Homily for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sun. in Ordinary Time

I am very happy to be back with you this weekend after my month-long health leave. Thank you all for your prayers and support!

In today's first reading, we hear from Moses. He is one of the greatest prophets, who performed mighty deeds and lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt. Yet as great as he is, Moses tells us that a much greater prophet will come after him, one who would speak God's Word to them in all its power.

Who could that be? Obviously, we who live today know that the answer is Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of all humanity, but the answer wasn't clear to the first people who heard Moses say this, nor to their descendants over the next several centuries. They waited for the coming of this great prophet, the long-awaited Messiah, who would deliver them from all evil. Generation after generation, they looked to one leader after another, to see if, finally, this might be the Messiah.

Their first king, Saul, was a likely candidate, a mighty warrior, God's anointed. Yet he proved to be a disappointment. Even his successor, the great King David, also proved to imperfect. When Jesus finally did arrive, many did not recognize Him as the Messiah. They had been distracted and disappointed by too many false prophets.

We Christians are blessed to know that Jesus is our Messiah, that great prophet promised by Moses long ago. But today, we still have to be on our guard against false prophets, claiming to speak on God's behalf. How do we tell the difference between authentic and false prophets, those who will truly lead us closer to God and those who only seek to lure us away?

The short answer is that true prophets will be like Jesus. In what way? While false prophets are self-centered, a true prophet will be focused on God. While false prophets demand that we serve them, true prophets come to serve. While false prophets promise us that they will make everything easy if we just follow them, true prophets are honest about how difficult it can be to follow God, but they stick by our side to help us on the journey. And while false prophets flee at the first sign of danger, true prophets will imitate Jesus in their willingness to suffer and even lay down their lives for us. As Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote, the devil may come to us with wondrous deeds, but only Jesus will come bearing wounds of love for us.

When we recognize God speaking through such prophets, let us not harden our hearts, but rather open them wide to receive the power of God's Word.