

In our Old Testament reading for today, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is speaking to the people of Israel. Because Israel is standing right on the border of the promised land and they're getting ready to go in just as God had said that they would. And so what Moses is doing throughout the whole book of Deuteronomy is getting them ready to go into the promised land so they can listen to what God intends for them. But there's a real problem at work here. The problem is that Moses himself can't actually go into the land. Moses sinned at the waters of Meribah. He was angry, and he said some things that he shouldn't have said, and he did not uphold the Lord as holy in the eyes of Israel. And for that reason God said to Moses, "You will not enter the promised land."

But the reason why that's a problem is, who is going to lead them? Moses had led them for the past 40 some years, and now they're wondering, who's going to take care of us? Who is going to speak to us the words of God? And that's the question that Moses is answering today, that they need to look for a prophet like him, one that God would raise up. And it is to him, Moses says, that you shall listen. And whoever does not listen to that prophet, God will require it of him. Because God takes his Word very seriously and he wants us to take it seriously too.

But after the book of Deuteronomy, Moses dies, and the people of Israel go into the land, just as God said that they would. And there were many prophets who came after Moses, who all spoke the words of God to the people of Israel. You know the names of many of them: Elijah, Elisha, or the prophets who wrote books of the Bible like Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel or any of the 12 prophets who wrote the last 12 books of the [Old Testament]. They all spoke in the name of God. But none of them were quite like Moses. None of them were the fulfillment of this prophecy. Because we hear in Deuteronomy chapter 34, the very end of the book, where the Lord says this: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel." So in other words, all of these other prophets, even though they spoke for God, none of them saw God face to face. None of them did the same miracles that Moses did. None of them was a prophet like Moses.

Until Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the prophet. Jesus is the prophet like Moses promised all those years ago. Jesus knew the Father face to face in a way that none of the other prophets had done. Jesus did greater miracles than any of those other prophets. And so Jesus is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy chapter 18, which means that we are called, then, to listen to him, to listen to his voice because he speaks to us the words of God. And whoever does not listen to his voice will have to answer for it, because God is quite serious about his Word, and he wants us to be serious about it too.

So let me ask you, Christians. Do you listen to Jesus? Do you listen to what he has to say in every time and in every place? Because God requires this of us. He wants us to listen to his Son. He wants us to listen to what Jesus says, because he will require those words of us. This isn't just an indifferent thing, a kind of take it or leave it, do with it what you will. God wants us to listen, because those who do not listen to the voice of Christ will be judged in this life and in the life to come. We find examples of this all throughout the Scriptures, but let me give you three in particular.

The first one is Israel itself wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Because when Israel got to the promised land the first time, God told them, "Go in to the land and take it over. Go in. You will be victorious. I will be with you." But Israel refused to listen to God. They didn't want to do it. They didn't want to go into the land. And so God said, "Fine! If you don't want to take my word seriously, then you're going to wander for 40 years in the wilderness until all of this generation is dead." Because God takes his Word seriously, and he wants us to take it seriously too.

The second example we have is Israel being sent away into exile for 70 years. Because they had been in the promised land for many, many years, but they kept turning aside to false gods, turning aside to idols, turning aside and doing the things they weren't supposed to be doing. And for that reason, God said, "All right, if you don't want to take my Word seriously, then you are going to leave this land for 70 years until I bring you back." Because God takes his Word seriously, Christians, and he expects us to take it seriously too.

The last example we have is the city of Jerusalem itself, when it was destroyed in the year 70 A.D. Because the Jews rejected Jesus. They didn't want him to be king. They didn't want him to be the one who had been promised to them. And so they crucified the Lord of glory. And God said, "Fine! If you don't want to take my Son seriously, then I will destroy the temple and I will destroy this city." And Israel according to the flesh has been cast off forever until they believe in Jesus by faith. Because God takes his word seriously, Christians, and he wants us to take it seriously too.

So let me ask you again. Do you listen to what God has to say? Do you listen to the words of Christ? When Jesus tells us to do something, do we do it? Do we try to keep the Word of God? When Jesus tells us, "Love your neighbor as I have loved you," do you do it? Or do we just try to find excuses so we don't have to do it? When Jesus commands us to do whatever it might be, to be watchful, for example, to pay attention, to be diligent in prayer and diligent in his Word, do you do it? Do you listen to what Christ has to say? Because Jesus takes his Word seriously, and he expects us to take it seriously too.

When Jesus tells us to not do something, do you not do it? Take anything from the Sermon on the Mount, for example. When Jesus says something like, "Do not commit adultery, but if you even look at a woman with lust in your heart, you have already committed adultery with her," do you try to avoid that sin? Or do you try to make excuses so that we can get out of listening to what Jesus has to say? But Jesus doesn't take that lightly. We are called to pay attention, to listen to what God has to say.

And when Jesus says something about himself, about who he is as the Son of God or as the son of David or whatever it might be, do you believe that? Do you hold onto that as the truth? Or do you treat it as something that you can take it or leave it, just pick and choose what you want and it doesn't matter what somebody else believes? Jesus takes his Word seriously, Christians, and he will not hold guiltless those who simply cast it aside.

But if Jesus takes his Word seriously and his commandments and his commands to us, Jesus also takes very seriously the promises that he has made to us. Because God makes promises that he intends to keep. God means what he says. And so God promises us that he will be with us always. God promises us that we will have a peace beyond all understanding. God promises us that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And God means what he says. So when we are afraid, wondering what the world is going to do to us or whatever tomorrow might bring, God promises to us that he will be with us always. And God means what he says. And he wants us to believe what he says. When we are worried about what's going to happen to us and we're worried about anything around us and we can't seem to find any sort of peace, God has promised to us a peace beyond all understanding in his Son Jesus Christ. And God means what he says, and he means for us to take that seriously too. And whenever we wonder whether we can find forgiveness, whenever we wonder if God will ever love us, God has promised that all those who confess their sins and call on his name will be saved. God is serious about what he says, and he wants us to be serious about it too.

So Christians, on this day, listen to the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to what he has to say. Because he has given us his commands. He has given us what he wants us to do, and we should listen to that. But we also must listen to what he has promised to us, because God is serious about what he says. He means it. He is trustworthy and true. And we can listen to him with new hearts, because God will not fail to keep his Word.

To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.