

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday in Advent, November 30, 2008

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Hymns: 359, 324: 1-2, 56, 364,353: 1-3.
Lessons: Isaiah 61: 1-11, Acts 3: 22-26, Luke 4: 16-30
Sermon Text: Acts 10: 36-43.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus Christ, also called Jesus, the Christ, had a single purpose to his life and his work. His work was the salvation of mankind. You know who he is – true God and true Man. That is what we mean when we speak of his “person”. Scripture also distinguishes three aspects of his work of redeeming mankind.

Christ himself says that he came to earth to preach the Gospel, as you heard in our Gospel lesson in Luke 4:18: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed."* This is one aspect of his work, that of a prophet. In Matthew 20:28 He says that he came to give his life a ransom: *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* This is his work as a priest. In John 18:37 he tells Pilate and us that he is a king, the third aspect of his work: *"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* In these verses we see that Jesus is a Prophet who is to preach good news, we see that he is a Priest who offered the sacrifice for mankind, and he is a King. This has been called his three-fold office.

Based on such a study of Jesus Christ in Scripture, the Christian church has over the centuries organized the study of the doctrines of Jesus Christ into 1. His person, 2. His office, and 3. His work. In summary, his person is both true God and true man, born of the Virgin Mary as we confess in the creed. His work is redemption – he “has redeemed me” – the words of Luther’s explanation of the second article of the creed. But for some people, there has been some confusion about his “office”. We often tend to think of the work he did and still does for us in terms of his office. But in these three Sundays leading up to the celebration of his birth, let’s examine more closely the three-fold office of Jesus Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King.

We tend to think of “office” as a place where business is carried out. But the first dictionary meaning of “office” is a special duty, charge, or position given to someone for a public purpose, or a position to exercise a public function, a position of responsibility. I have tried in catechism instruction classes to explain office in terms of the title on someone’s office door, or the title on a business card. Jesus Christ would have a business card that would give his title or office as “prophet, priest, and king”. Today let’s talk about the fact that

JESUS CHRIST WAS ANOINTED TO THE OFFICE OF PROPHET

- 1. What the Old Testament prophets were anointed to do.**
- 2. What Christ did as THE PROPHET while he was on earth.**

So how did Jesus Christ get these offices of Prophet, Priest, and King? The Bible calls him “the anointed one”, and “God’s anointed”, and the “Lord’s anointed one”. The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for “the anointed one” is the word we have come to know as “Messiah”. That is pretty much what the Hebrew

word sounds like. The New Testament word is “the Christ”, or “Christ”. He has been anointed to his office. Today when we speak of anointing someone, that is a pretty much foreign idea. Among God’s people in the Old Testament and into the New Testament times, anointing was pouring oil on a man’s head, a special oil with special significance, often in a special ceremony indicating someone has been chosen or selected to do something special. Priests were anointed. Kings were anointed. Prophets were anointed. In our Lutheran church, we don’t have any such anointing. The closest we might come to anointing is when at confirmation the pastor lays his hand on the head of the person being confirmed and says a blessing. When a minister is ordained or installed there is a similar laying on of hands.

A prophet is one who speaks for another, as Aaron was to speak for Moses. ***“Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.” Exodus 7:1-2*** A prophet of God is one who speaks for God, making known and explaining the word and will of God to man. We read in the New Testament that a prophet of God is God’s representative and ambassador to man. ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19-20. Did you notice that “we” – all Christians – then are prophets, commanded to speak as God’s ambassadors?

Many Jews recognized Jesus as “a prophet” but few recognized him as THE PROPHET whom God would send to fulfill the words of Moses. God told the people through Moses: ***“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”*** Deuteronomy 18:15 A few verses later he reports God said: ***“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.”*** V. 16

The Old Testament prophets were anointed to tell people God’s Word, especially the good news about the coming Savior. We read in scripture that God told Elijah ***“anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.”*** 1 Kings 19:16 Jeremiah complained that he was not ready to be a prophet but we read in the seventh verse of his book ***“But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.”*** Jeremiah 1:7 Such Old Testament verses speak of God’s prophets. Now in passages such as Acts 3:18 we read: ***“But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.”*** We find the fulfillment, the conclusion, of their speaking as prophets pointing forward to the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ.

Christ didn’t take this job, this calling of being a prophet, on by himself. He was called and anointed by God to do these things, and Scripture says he was anointed as a prophet. St. Luke writes in Acts 10:37-38 ***“You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”*** He also spoke of himself as prophet: ***“In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”*** Luke 13:33

Jesus is not a prophet of the same type and rank as other prophets mentioned in Scripture, but he is much greater. Even though he was a prophet like Moses, he was greater as we read in Hebrews 3:2-3: ***“just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses”***

In the first words of St. John’s gospel we read ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*** As words reveal our hidden thoughts, so the Son of God is called the Word of God because he declared, he made known to man the thoughts and the will of God. No man can of himself

know anything of God. All revelation of God as we have it recorded in the Bible comes to us from Christ through the Holy Ghost. In the first words of the letter to the Hebrews (1:1-2) we read ***“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”***

As the great prophet and the conclusion of all Old Testament prophecies about the prophet **greater** than Moses who would come, Christ preached God’s Word, especially the good news of eternal life, which is the Gospel. Through his work he completed the Gospel of reconciliation and continues to proclaim it through His church. In the Old Testament lesson you heard Jesus read in our Gospel lesson; you hear that Jesus proclaims that he is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies. Listen again to Isaiah 61:1-3: ***“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”*** In our Gospel lesson you heard Jesus say ***“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*** Luke 4:21 NIV)

We find many examples of Jesus as a prophet, a proclaimer, a teacher, a messenger from God. One such example we find when Jesus teaches Nicodemus in John Chapter 3, in the verses which include “the gospel in a nutshell” – John 3:16. In Luke 8:1 we read that ***“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.”*** Peter was also one who said ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*** John 6:68. Among the words Jesus had been teaching are these: ***“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*** John 6:63. At his transfiguration, we read of Jesus and his three disciples on the mountaintop, ***“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”***“ Matthew 17:5

After his resurrection we find a clear confession by believers that Jesus was a prophet from God. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were talking ***“About Jesus of Nazareth.”*** They talked about him saying ***“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”*** Luke 24:19

And because Jesus Christ is plainly the anointed great prophet of God we are to listen to him, to hear him when he speaks. And he speaks through his Word. Jesus provides us with all the words we need to know.

Jesus gave to his disciples His holy inspired Word and commanded them to teach all nations the things he had commanded them. He has also made all believers ambassadors and prophets to speak for him, on his behalf.

With such a marvelous message, the very words of eternal life, we are excited, and willing to share and speak of what we believe. And Jesus sent his disciples – that includes us – to be his prophets. We, the disciples of Jesus, can go and speak to others about Jesus, for he sends his disciples. He said in John 20:21 ***“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*** In fact, we have his command: ***“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*** Mark 16:15. And we have these words for comfort and encouragement in our task of being Jesus’ spokesmen, Jesus’ prophets: ***“He who listens to you listens to me”***, Luke 10:16 (NIV) or as the KJV puts it: ***“He that heareth you heareth me”***.

O, Lord Jesus, great prophet, make us good witnesses and prophets for you! Amen.