

Sermon for December 21st, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

READINGS

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— **16** just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ **17** And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. **18** 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. **19** And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Psalm 111

1 Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them.

3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.

4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.

5 He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy;

8 they are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

9 He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.

Holy and awesome is his name!

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!

Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 1:46-55

46 And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Our text for meditation this Fourth Sunday in Advent is on our Old Testament reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

“Why can't I go outside and see God for myself?” This is a common question asked by atheists in their contentions against us Christians. Another version of this might be “why doesn't God just show Himself?” Hidden within their question is a silly assumption that if you cannot *see, hear, touch, taste or smell* something it must not exist. If you cannot hear it, it must not make sound; if you cannot see it, it must not have any visage; if you cannot smell or taste or touch it, it must not have any of the tangential properties there either; if it lacks all of these entirely, the atheist reasons, it simply must not be.

Throughout the centuries, various Christian apologists have tried to answer this question to varying degrees of success. First of all, it is absurd for them to argue that God doesn't exist solely because we cannot see Him, especially if they believe in imperceptible bacteria, imperceptible radio waves, and imperceptible photons. Should we say that these things did not exist until there were inventions that made perceiving them possible? If the existence of those things did not depend on our ability or inability to see them, then why should we say that God's existence is dependent on human perception? And then there are numbers, the laws of logic, the laws of nature, and more things that cannot exist physically yet are *crucial* to the operations of reality. If an atheist says “I can't see God, therefore He isn't real,” then he ought to say “I cannot see the number one, therefore there is not one of anything.” Great job, atheists, you just told everyone that you don't believe $1+1=2$.

Other apologists have taken a more theological approach. God is Holy, so holy in fact that seeing Him would undo us sinners. After all, God tells Moses “you cannot see My Face, for man shall not see Me and live.”¹ When the elders of Israel shared a meal with God on Mount Sinai, they only saw His feet and the sapphire pavement under them, apparently spending the entire time looking down to

1 Exodus 33:20

keep from *dying*.² So the apologists say that God walking around would simply lead to everyone perishing. There is some merit to that, but the nonbeliever could reply “well why don't I hear Him then? Wouldn't hearing be enough?” To which point I reply that He has made Himself audible many, many times. He has also shown up *visibly*.

When God Shows Up Audibly

Moses tells the Israelites that there will be another prophet. The office of prophet was established precisely because God spoke the Ten Commandments to them at Horeb, and they were so terrified that they begged Him to stop.³ Of course, God spoke from the heavens at other times, including at the Mount of Transfiguration⁴ and when Christ says “Father, glorify Your Name” after the Triumphal Entry.⁵ But for the most part, our Lord spoke through the prophets to deliver messages to the people. If an atheist ever tells us that God ought to be audible, we can reply that He has demonstrated this many, many times.

This is to say nothing of all the prophecies in Scripture which were confirmed to be true. From the prophets predicting the Babylonian Exile to the restoration to the conquests of the Persians and Greeks and Romans, all the way up to the Incarnation and the Atonement and the Resurrection – my friends if you want *confirmation* that our Lord has spoken to men individually as well, these prophecies are the proof of it! This is also the case for prophecies about things that happened *after* the canon of Scripture was completed, as we see with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D.⁶

Now of course the atheist might reply that no one is hearing God speak *now*, so whatever evidence I present from the Scriptures does not count. Again, the nonbeliever is being silly here. Plenty of people – hundreds of thousands at this point – have claimed to hear God speak to them, from the first century A.D. to the current day. The nonbeliever *chooses* to not believe them, not out of any proof that these hundreds of thousands were all liars or hallucinating, but simply because he does not want to. Frankly, the atheist would likely tell himself that *he* was hallucinating if God spoke to him.

When God Shows Up Visibly

God has shown up visibly as well though my friends. Yes, He was present at Horeb as the mountain burned, but He arrived many other times as “the Angel of the Lord” and “the Word of the Lord” in the Old Testament.⁷ Even more importantly, He arrived as the Prophet, about whom Moses wrote. Let us reread the last verse in our reading:

19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Yes, it is this chapter in which our Lord has Moses establish the prophetic office, but this *particular* Prophet is different than all the others. For any other man delivering oracles that are presumably from God, the Israelites are called to *not* believe them until they have been tested; if they give a false prophecy, or if they start teaching the people to believe in other deities, then whatever they said must be disregarded and the false prophet must be abominated.⁸ But *this* Prophet is different entirely, as our Lord tells everyone to listen to Him or else be judged by our Lord Himself.

Of course, that Prophet whom Moses is writing about is our Lord Jesus. If an Israelite withheld belief in a prophet like Isaiah's words or Malachi's oracle until they had been properly tested, then it was no sin. Even to this day, if some goofball doesn't think Haggai is inspired and does not belong in

2 Exodus 24:9-10

3 Exodus 20:18-21

4 Mark 9:7

5 John 12:27-29

6 Matthew 24:1-2

7 <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/examples-of-christophanies-in-the-old-testament.html>

8 Deuteronomy 18:20-22

the canon of Scripture, this does not put his salvation in danger.⁹ But to refrain from believing Christ's teachings is *deadly*, for Christ has the words of eternal life,¹⁰ and our salvation is predicated on faith in them.¹¹ God says to ancient Israel that *this* Prophet is different, because He is the true Divine Messenger – the Logos or the Word¹² – He is *God among us*.¹³

Remembering

Advent is a time for remembering. Here, with our reading, we remember that God has proven His existence so many times for so many generations. With all of the eyewitness accounts, all of the lived experiences, and the solid evidence of Scripture itself (before we even get to things like nature or archaeology), He has made Himself undeniably known to humanity in a way that *ought* to satisfy any intellectually *honest* atheist. He did so in such a way that although His holy essence would destroy us, we were kept safe so that we could have the opportunity to believe.

But it is this one appearance of our God, as the true Prophet of whom Moses wrote, that is the most important. When Christ was born in that manger in Bethlehem, He arrived to show Himself to us – not just to prove that He *exists*, but to *save* us. It is our God arriving *visibly*, to come and die on a Cross for our sins, that assures us that He is, that He loves us, and that just as Christ was risen from the dead we may be assured of our eternal life as well. May we then listen to His Words.

Now the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

9 Nobody should do this, by the way. The entirety of the 66 book canon is fully inspired by God.

10 John 6:67-69

11 Mark 16:16

12 John 1

13 Matthew 1:23