

## 4 Epiphany 2024

**TEXT: Deuteronomy 18:15-22/! Corinthians 8:1-13**

**THEME: "...so who are you going to believe?..."**

**So, who are you going to believe? Me or your lying EYES?**

It's pretty tough these days to know just who you should believe about most anything.

***Don't get vaccinated!*** Dr Fauci inserted a tracking device through the syringe...say the people who take their cell phones and drive their cars everywhere (both of which have tracking devices in them.)

Again...***don't pay attention*** to the women who hold up reproductive rights signs that read MY BODY MY CHOICE say the people who hold up that same sign when it comes to their refusing vaccinations.

One set of voices says that **the 2020 election** was the most closely vetted and protected election in American history...while the others say it was stolen, rigged...every time after a loss and now even before they lose.

**FOX News** claims to be fair and balanced...then pays nearly \$800M for getting caught in massive deceitful programming. **MSNBC** claims to tell the news impartially but leans way left in its reporting.

Politicians get caught on camera and microphones saying one thing then get caught doing what they first condemned. and then when questioned, they deny, deny.

Where's Walter Cronkite, Huntley & Brinkley when we need them?  
Trustworthy names from the past, eh?

Just heard **AI artificial intelligence** is now used to fake candidate voices in political ads and photoshop pictures and streaming events to look real when they never happened. **AI or just plain dumb?**

**So, who are you going to believe? Me or your lying EARS?**

This challenge for truth is new only in its sophistication.

**In the Deuteronomy lesson, that same question comes up** in Mose's time too. **Who can you believe to be telling God's truth?**

God's people don't want to hear from God directly anymore. No more smoke by day and fire by night or shaking mountains and earthquakes. God is just too awesome...God's voice too overwhelming.

They want a human voice, a go-between. Somebody like a Moses to stand between them and God.

God agrees to raise up prophets and speak through them, prophets who will hear God's message and speak for God to all the people.

**It's a good deal, but it comes with both questions & warnings.**

**What about those** who claim to speak for God...without God's permission?

**What about those** who are to speak for God...but fail to do so?

**What about those** who hear God's word but fail to listen?

An even bigger question: **How are we to know the difference...know who truly speaks for God and who is deceiving us?**

You might not like the answer the bible story gives.

Bible says it works this way: **you will know who is telling the truth if and when what they are saying actually comes true.**

## **How can you know? Who gives the faithful word?**

What we need is **foresight** because what we want is **insight**. What we are left with is **hindsight**. **How's that working out?**

**Tell you a tale of two pastors, two voices, to show the challenge we face.**

One pastor is Lutheran. One pastor is Evangelical. One is an uncle and the other his nephew. Both believe God seeks our engagement in daily life. Both believe faithful citizenship lives out the command to love God and neighbor. But they go in opposite directions with their messages.

## **Who will you believe is telling the gospel truth?**

**The nephew** left ministry for a time to enter politics. He became a state legislator. He supports the former president's policies. Believes him to be God's chosen man. Is willing to look past personal faults and moral failings, past 40K falsehoods (nobody's perfect) because he supports right policies on abortion, immigration, the border wall, tax breaks and the ridiculing of a liberal, lying press and news corp.

Says his Christian faith leads him to support Trump. Believes your faith should lead you there too.

**The uncle** believes faith in Jesus leads in the opposite direction. That the former president, now candidate again, is singularly unfit for the job, that his behavior and policies go against just about every biblical teaching imaginable. That his previous and proposed policies are a tragic rejection of the gospel message to love, serve, care for every neighbor regardless of color, status, ethnicity, identity or country of origin.

The uncle believes his faith leads him to dismiss the former president's person and his policies and believes your faith should do the same.

**In Deuteronomy, God promised to raise up truth-teller voices.  
So, who are you going to believe? Either? Neither?**

Last time 70+ million believed like the nephew. 80+ million believed like the uncle. But it's not a matter of numbers or of being a winner or loser.

Said what we need is **foresight**. What we want is **insight**. What we are left with is **hindsight to know what is a faithful word and what is not?**

**You need to know because your faith and your behavior, your choices matter.**

Apostle Paul, speaking of our newfound freedom in Christ, offers a gentle caution. He holds the faith community to a high standard...says that concern for others overrides personal, individual preferences.

Paul says take care that this liberty of yours, this newfound freedom in Christ, well, make sure your words and deeds do not become a stumbling block for the weak. Important because when you sin against others you sin against Jesus Christ.

Our rights and privileges and freedoms give way to whatever builds up, strengthens and serves the larger community, especially the weak among us. Says that in our words and deeds, think US, ALL, not just ME, because all are in this life and faith...together.

And our neighbor's needs are a primary concern.

**Remember that as you listen to anyone who claims to speak God's truth, speak the gospel word.**

**So who are you going to believe?**

**If the message you hear does not fit with the gospel message, don't believe it.**

**If the actions being called for don't fit with the gospel message to love and care for every neighbor, don't follow along.**

**If those who speak allow their words to be built on lies and falsehoods that bring harm and not good, don't fall for them.**

**As people of faith, you've been invited to use the gift of hindsight to help you gain insight, so that by foresight you can make choices that fit the gospel word you already know.**

At the very least, believe this:

In Jesus' love for all people, remember Jesus has command over even the unclean spirits among us. Believe that they too will, finally, obey him. And believe that we need not be frightened by them any longer.

AMEN

