

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. As you know, during Epiphany we went down the road less traveled, the Old Testament and seeing how the Old Testament made Christ manifest. With Lent we begin the journey to the cross, but we're also going to do it by making Christ manifest. Looking at the gospels and how the gospels point out and make it so very clear that Jesus is the Christ.

Ultimately, we end up where we left off last week with Jesus talking to Nicodemus and pointing out that just as the bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up. And of course, He was speaking about the cross. The problem is when you do a sermon series like this, is where in the world do you start?

All four of the gospels were written with the intent of making Christ manifest. Matthew, the former tax collector or publican, he after Christ ascended into heaven, went to Alexandria Egypt which was the center of knowledge at that time. It had the world's largest library, and he wrote in a way to meet the needs of the scholarly Hebrew people who were there. Matthew oftentimes says something like this in his gospel: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophets." The gospel of Mark was written by Mark who was the disciple of Saint Peter and so early on it was referred to as the gospel of Saint Peter as written by Mark. Then there's Luke, the physician, he wrote it to make Christ manifest to a Roman who was named Theophilus. And John, John is very bold in what he says: "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing, you may have life in His name." All four gospels are written to make Christ manifest and they have a common thread; a critical key for us to understand how they were able to write like this.

Certainly it's because of the Holy Spirit, but it's also because of something that we read in Luke 24. And He, Jesus said to them, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "Oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses, and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all

the scriptures the things concerning Himself. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; they all had access to Jesus. And if Jesus opened up the scriptures to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, I'm sure either they or Jesus, Himself did the same with His 11 apostles.

So, we just finished the Old Testament; well almost. Let's wrap it up with Matthew. The one who was writing to the scholarly Hebrew people in Alexandria; the one who focuses on tying Jesus to the Old Testament prophets. He begins with the genealogy, literally Lineage Lane, from Abraham to Joseph. But he does it in a unique way. He starts with Abraham and goes to David and he notes that that's 14 generations. Then he goes from King David to the time of exile in Babylon and he notes that that is 14 generations. Then he goes from the exile of Babylon to Joseph, another 14 generations. This truly backs up what the Bible says about God, that God is a God of order. That's pretty orderly. But then when we take a look at it, we see that his birth is also tied to the prophecies. In particular Isaiah 7:14. And remember Isaiah wrote this about 700 years before Jesus. Behold the virgin will conceive and bear a son. That's a pretty bold prophecy. As far as I know, that's only happened one time in history that a virgin conceived and had a son.

But the Bible doesn't stop there. Micah, who was also writing a little over 700 years before Jesus, nails down the place: "And you O Bethlehem and the land of Judah, from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people." Wow he nailed Bethlehem 700 years in advance and at that time Bethlehem was really small. But he also nails who Jesus will be, a shepherd. And it's Jesus himself who says, "I am the Good Shepherd."

Well, you know what happened. Herod was out to get the baby Jesus and so Mary and Joseph being warned in a dream took him to Egypt which would again fulfill another prophecy by the prophet Hosea. Again, writing about 700 years before Jesus lived. "Out of Egypt I have called my son." Meanwhile back in Bethlehem, Herod had all the babies two years old and younger, killed. It fulfills another scripture-Jeremiah 31:15 "a voice was heard in Rama weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children, she refused to be comforted because they are no

more.” All of these things right there in the very first couple of chapters of Matthew. Each one of them includes, all took place to fulfill what the prophets have written.

But when we continue on to Jesus’s ministry and we find Matthew keep following the same power. First of all, you have John the Baptist, who's preparing the way for the Lord and Matthew properly ties that to Isaiah 40, verse 3, “The voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.” Well, he prepared the way of the Lord and he also spoke freely about the truth including that Herod’s; well, Herod’s lifestyle left quite a bit to be desired shall we say. And so, Herod had him arrested. And since he was proclaiming that Jesus is the One to come, Jesus left the area and he moved his base of operations up to Capernaum on the northern side of the sea of Galilee. Now why do that? Well because that's what the prophecy said. Isaiah 9:1-2 “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.” Who? Well the people dwelling in darkness, what people? The people in the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. Where is Zebulun and Naphtali? It's on the way of the Sea. The Mediterranean Sea, or the sea of God beyond the Jordan. What's beyond the Jordan? The headwaters the sea of Galilee. Really? Are you sure Galilee of the Gentiles? By the way, when Isaiah wrote this the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles-that was a part of Israel. There weren't gentiles there. It wasn't ruled by the gentiles. So, he's prophesying that this is where Jesus is going to be centering his ministry, and it will be and run by the gentiles at that point in time. And not just that, on them, the gentiles, the light has dawned. This takes us back to Abraham ‘and in you, all nations will be blessed.’

We go to Matthew, chapter 12 and we see Jesus healing a man with a withered hand. What's unique is that he does this after asking the Pharisees a question. He asked them, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And the reason He asks them that it gives because it is the Sabbath, and on their way to the synagogue on their way to church, Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field. Evidently, they had skipped breakfast because the disciples were hungry. And as they're going

through the field it's harvest time they're picking off some of the grains, some of the oats, and eating it. They're having some fresh granola and the pharisees are watching for Jesus, they're watching so they can catch Him with something. And they condemn what the disciples are doing. They're working on the Sabbath! And Jesus points out how David also ate the show bread and you know it's OK to do stuff on the Sabbath that is necessary for the sustenance of life. And He ends that discussion by saying for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. I can just see the hairs on the pharisee's neck standing on end.

And then we read that He went to their synagogue. These very Pharisees who were questioning Him and condemning His disciples, it's their synagogue that he goes to. And He asks them in the synagogue, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They don't answer but He heals this man with a withered hand they have nothing to say because how do you how do you contest that? What we do read is, the pharisee's went up and conspired against Him and how to destroy Him. What did Jesus do? Only fulfilled Isaiah 42, verse 4. He withdrew from there. In His name, the gentiles will have hope. He went back to dealing with the gentile people.

In Matthew 13, we see Jesus speaking in parables which is a fulfillment of Psalm 78 written about 1000 years before Jesus. And in that chapter, we hear the parable of the Sower, and the four different kinds of soil and the seed that lands on that. And then Jesus explains it to his disciples so that they can understand it. He also continues with the parable of the weeds, the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of leaven, the parable of hidden treasure, the parable of the pearl of great value, the parable of the net. And what was the reaction of the Pharisees and those who were listening to Jesus that were seeking to destroy Him? Jesus himself quotes Isaiah 6, verses 9 & 10' "you will indeed hear but never understand." The Pharisee's never did understand except for maybe Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus as we mentioned last week.

We move to that last week Holy Week which will be at the very end of Lent, Jesus enters the Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a donkey. Yep, you guessed it, prophesied by Zechariah 500 years before that he would enter on a donkey. And that takes us then to one of the parts that just

kind of blows my mind. We call them the one-day prophecies, that occurred in the 24-hour period between the time of Jesus having the Passover meal with His disciples and His crucifixion. What happens in that time? Well, one of my favorites is the whole trail of money recorded in Zechariah 11:12 and 13. Where again, Zechariah, hundreds of years in advance tells us that Jesus would be betrayed. The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend, he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Again, try putting a price on something 700 years or so from now and get it right. That money would then be thrown on the floor in the temple and then that money would be invested in buying a potter's field. All of that prophesied hundreds of years in advance. It all came to be. As I said, that was just part of the one-day prophecies. What else happened during that 24-hour period? Well that Jesus would be arrested, that he would be stripped, that he would be beaten, that he would be mocked, that he would be led out of town like the scapegoat, we are back on Atonement Ave. That he would be crucified, but the word crucified is not used. Crucifixion hadn't been invented yet. But the prophets say that Jesus would have his hands pierced, his feet pierced, his side pierced. Wow, that was never done until the time of Jesus. That he would be executed with criminals, betrayed by a friend, denied by others, deserted but some would stand far off, and that when he died, he would be buried with the rich. Oh, all within the 24-hour period. All prophesied hundreds of years in advance, pretty amazing huh? Oh yeah, I forgot one thing, silly me! And then on the third day He would rise.

It certainly starts with a bang the virgin conceiving, and being born in Bethlehem. It had never happened before. Rising from the dead; that only happened when, well when God was involved in some others but most of the people all ended up dying anyways. Not Jesus as we know, He ascended in to heaven, and He's coming back!

All of this put together I think is what inspired John to write in his gospel; consider this, "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the book that would be written." So many were the

things that Jesus did that were tied directly to the prophecies or tied directly to things that only God Himself would know or could do.

This is Jesus! The one who Matthew, Peter, and who all the guys in our church in the stained-glass windows up there other than John; were willing to die for. And they all have one other common belief, they fully expect Jesus to come back. Is it any wonder that they would fully expect that? After having Jesus explain to them, and show them all these things of how He fulfilled all the prophecies beginning with Moses and going through the prophets? This is my hope and my prayer, that we also have that firm conviction that He indeed is the promised Messiah.

In our Saviors' Name, Amen.