

12 March 2008  
Lent 5 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

### “The Torah Story”: Deuteronomy – Maturity

Tonight we come to the end of our journey through The Torah Story. We have considered the beginnings and promises of **Genesis**. We have seen the birth of God’s people through the Red Sea in **Exodus**. We contemplated God’s teaching of His people as they grew in the faith in **Leviticus**. And we reflected on the adolescence and rebellion of God’s people in the book of **Numbers**. And through it all, we have seen that their story is our story, their struggles our struggles, their blessings our blessings. The God of Israel is the eternal, unchangeable God, and how He dealt with His people then is how He deals with His people today. And so we can learn a lot about ourselves by looking back at those who came before us. For we are cut from the same cloth.

The book of Numbers last week took us through the wilderness wanderings of Israel and to the border of the Promised Land. That is where the book of Deuteronomy takes place also. For Deuteronomy is the book of sermons delivered by Moses as the people got ready to cross into the Promised Land. It is a looking back, a reviewing, of all that has taken place, of all that God had told them and given to them, and of what they had learned on the journey. The faith and love of the people of God have grown as God has been working on them and working in them. And so now they prepare for the future by looking to the past. They have reached a certain **maturity** as the people of God.

But as many of you know, maturity bring its own set of challenges and struggles. It is different than the growing as children and the rebellion of adolescence. For at this time – maturity – perhaps more than the others, *there is the uncertainty of change*. And for the people of Israel, this loomed large at this time. For not only were they about to cross over into a new land, they would have to do so without the one who had been with them and led them and been their mediator with God. They would have to go forward *without Moses*, who was going to be taken from them. He would not enter into this Promised Land. To lead this people finally across the Jordan would be left for another – for Joshua. And so in Deuteronomy we have Moses’ final words to the people, to remind them, encourage them, and point them to the one and only

source of their confidence and security – to put their faith not in any man, but in God and His promises alone.

But that isn't easy. When spouses are taken from us, or parents die; when pastors leave, or well-loved leaders move on, we often grow fearful. A future without these people we have relied on seems difficult at best, and impossible at worst. How will we go on? Who will take care of us? And the uncertainty can be paralyzing, and fear grows as it feeds upon itself. It is hard to believe. It is hard to have faith. It is hard to be confident. And so it must have been for the people of Israel, too. To think of a future without Moses.

And so God speaks an important word of promise to the people through Moses – to comfort them, to encourage them – saying: “*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.*” Another prophet was coming, who would be a deliverer, *like Moses*.

Who would lead the people through water, *like Moses*. Who would be a mediator with God, *like Moses*. Who would speak God's Word to the people, *like Moses*. He would give the people bread, *like Moses*, and water, *like Moses*. He would be a prophet *like Moses*, but *greater* than Moses, for He would finish the job that Moses could not finish, and take His people *all the way* from their slavery and into the Promised Land. And so though Moses was leaving, the people would not be alone. God would provide for them. He would take care of them, and give them rest and a future.

That prophet's name was Joshua. *At first*, the Joshua that took over for Moses there at the border of Canaan. But ultimately, it was the Joshua whose name in the Greek language is pronounced “Jesus.” For as we heard from Hebrews, He is the one who gives His people the *true* Sabbath rest of God. And as we heard from John, He is the prophet who was to come; the prophet greater than Moses. For it is Jesus who delivers us from our slavery to sin. It is Jesus who takes us through the waters of Baptism that we be born from above as children of God. It is Jesus who is our mediator with God, bringing God to us and taking us to God. It is Jesus who speaks God's Word to us, for He is the Word of God incarnate. It is Jesus who is the bread of life, and who gives us the living water of the Spirit so that we never thirst again. And it is Jesus that through His death and resurrection, provides the way through death for us, that we may enter our promised Sabbath rest in Heaven. He is our Joshua, who does what Moses and all the Law cannot do – give us life in the forgiveness of our sins.

And so through all the changes and transitions of life, as we mature and grow older, as times change and friends leave us, we need not be afraid. For what God promises, God delivers. He is bringing to fulfillment and completion all that He has been working *in* you, and working *through* you. Nothing by fate, nothing by chance, nothing forgotten. But through the years strengthening you in faith, building you in love, and drawing you closer to Him. So that when you “*tread the verge of the Jordan*” (LSB #918 v. 3) – and you are about to cross over to life on the other side, you will be ready. For your Joshua has prepared you, and He is the way, the truth, and the life. All the words that He speaks are true and sure. He does not deceive. And so you need not be afraid.

And know this – no matter how mature you may be, no matter how knowledgeable, no matter how tested and strong in faith – you are, and will always be, **children**. Children of your Heavenly Father. And under His grace and care. So,

Jesus, lead Thou on Till our rest is won.  
Heav'nly leader, still direct us,  
Still support, console, protect us,  
Till we safely stand In our fatherland. (LSB #718 v. 4)

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.