

*Introduction:* Facing the unknown can be a scary thing. Pastor Reed Lessing once shared this humorous story about his son to introduce a point about what it's like for any of us to face the unknown. It went something like this: "Daddy?" A little hand touched his father's forehead. The Pastor opened his eyes, which were fixed on the clock by his bed. It read 3:44. That would be a.m. "Yeah, Jonathan." "I need to go to the bathroom." "Thanks, son, for the breaking news bulletin!", the father mumbled with mock enthusiasm.

You see, Jonathan was four years old. Their home had just been remodeled, and one bathroom was now at the end of a long hallway. When you're four years old and wandering around the house in the middle of the night, a new hallway looks five miles long, with multiple side rooms where giants are waiting to jump out and eat little kids for late-night snacks.

"Daddy?" "Yeah, Jonathan." "Will you come with me?" "Thanks for the invitation, son, but believe it or not, I'm a bit tired. You go ahead." So, the boy shuffled away, stopped, turned around and shuffled back. "Daddy?" "Yes, Jonathan." "Please go with me?" "Okay." So, the pastor dutifully crawled of bed, and walked down the hall with his four-year-old son. You see, Jonathan had never been this way before.

4. In the Book of Deuteronomy, the people of Israel are also on the verge of a new journey. The whole nation had traveled from Egypt to Mt. Sinai and from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. After forty years in and around Kadesh-barnea, Israel traveled north on the King's Highway, around Edom, through the plains of Moab, and now, on the east bank of the Jordan River gazing west into the Promised Land, the people knew that in all their travels they had never been *this* way before.

This hallway looked five miles long, with multiple side rooms where giants were waiting to jump out and eat Israelites for late-night snacks. Had they not said in Numbers 13:32, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height"? There had been no circumcision or Passover for forty years, getting through the Jordan River presented a huge problem, and Jericho with its towering walls was looming in the immediate future. Making matters worse, according to Numbers 13:29: "The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan." Israel stands before a long, dark hallway. They had never been this way before.

3. You know that same sinking feeling, and so do I. Maybe you're terrified at the thought of bringing a new child home or watching your last child leave home. Maybe you're facing a situation on the job that has your stomach tied up in square knots. Maybe it's a financial setback or a spouse whose aged parents are succumbing to a terrible disease like cancer. Some of us are facing a future that's so frightening, so painful, and so private that it's only known to our God. Whatever our hallway may be, we mutter under our breath, "I've never been this way before."

The temptation is to seek direction in ways that only bring death. Immediately before our text, Moses warns the people not to be like all of the peoples of Canaan who conduct their affairs, that is, venture into the unknown, by listening to sorcerers and diviners. The people of Israel are to conduct *their* affairs in conformity with the word of the prophets. Commenting on this passage, Martin Luther wrote: "All these-since they are human inventions without the Word of God- must be condemned among the people of God, whose life and words must be governed by the sure Word of God" (AE 9:176).

In other words, we have two choices: We can listen to God or we can listen to the father of lies. And make no mistake, Satan *always* lies to us. He whispers in our ears, "Take no chances. Say no to courage and yes to caution. Expect the worst. Triple-lock all doors. Protect yourself in a tight radius of won'ts, don'ts, can'ts, and quits. Think about every possible peril, focus on the dangers, and worry yourself with 'What if?' Satan and the world offer only *lies*. Who will *lead* us into the future?"

2. Moses promises, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me" (Dt. 18:15). Because Moses was under divine judgment and therefore unable to lead Israel into the Promised Land, he promises another prophet just like himself. The Lord knows that long dark hallways are not conquered by promising, "I'll be with you in spirit." A mystical, abstract, vague presence does no good. Just ask any four-year-old. No. Dark hallways need a real person with a loving and authoritative voice.

Joshua was the first of these prophets who was like Moses (e.g., Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15; see also Exodus 14; Josh 3:14-17) and spoke the Lord's words (e.g., Joshua 23-24). Joshua safely led Israel to inherit the Promised Land (Josh 21:45). Other prophets like Moses included Samuel (1 Sam 3:20), Elijah (1 Ki 18:36), and Elisha (1 Ki 19:16). These prophets were the Lord's voice, leading Israel in her journey of faith. In contrast to the other offices given by the Lord, such as judge, king, and priest, the prophets

were the final authority. The prophetic Word endured forever (Is 40:8); it alone was all-powerful and able to lead Israel (Is 55:10-11).

1. The final fulfillment of the Lord's promise of a prophet like Moses is Jesus, Who is **greater** than Moses (cf. Jn 6:14; Acts 3:19-22),. Jesus not only speaks the truth, He **is** the truth (Jn 14:6). He not only speaks God's Word, He **is** God's Word, become flesh (Jn 1:14). Jesus not only knew the Father face-to-face (Deut 34:10), He **is** the face of the Father (2 Cor 4:6). Moses longed to see the Lord's glory (Ex 33:18), while Jesus **is** the glory of the Father (Jn 1:14). Moses led Israel to the **brink** of the Promised Land; Jesus completely **finishes** what He started (Phil 1:6). Some who heard Jesus did everything they could to muzzle His voice and silence His teaching. When their evil scheming and underhanded treachery failed, they finally employed Judas and Pilate. They used whips and thorns, nails and spear. "There!" they thought. "He will never speak again!" But three days later, the prophet spoke, "Peace to you!" (Lk 24:36). "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18). Unlike Joshua, Samuel, and other prophets, Jesus carried out *all* of the Father's promises. When He rose from the dead, He put the "Yes!" and "Amen!" behind all of what the Father said (2 Cor 1:20).

Alive on the third day, Jesus lives to lead us by His Word. The giants of sin and selfishness are slain by His Word (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). Unclean spirits submit to His teaching (Mk 1:21, 26). The enemy called Lucifer and Satan and the devil **must bow** to His Word (Mt 4:1-11). Jesus leads us by the Gospel which is proclaimed, by the baptismal deliverance which we remember, and by the body and blood of the Lord's Supper which we celebrate. "This is the feast of victory for our God" (LSB, p. 155). With confident hope, we await our final journey, the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come!

Just as the LORD provided Moses as well as many other prophets to lead Israel, so the LORD provides us His **final** prophet-**Jesus**- Whose death and resurrection empower us to march forward in faith. Because of Christ's cleansing blood, His resurrection joy, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, many Christians on the east bank of their own personal "Jordan Rivers", have dared to march straight ahead into all the great unknowns in their **own** lives. Paul tells us **why** in 2 Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ **always** leads us in triumphal procession."

Whatever your dark hallway may be, **listen! Listen, God is calling!** He says, "Go!" But He guarantees you will never, ever, ever go it alone. It's as Moses said in our text today: "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” (Dt. 18:15) **Listen** to Him, we **must. Follow** Him, we **will!** Amen