

### Classis Huron Sermon Evaluation: “Our Mediator” by Candidate Bart Eisen

This sermon is based on a text assigned by Classis Huron (Exodus 34:1-9) and it was preached on January 30, 2022 at Bethel CRC in Listowel. We were able to watch a video of the sermon which gave us valuable insight into the preacher's in-person style. His delivery reflected the fact that Bart has already been preaching for many years at Bethel and is comfortable leading worship there. He appeared to have good eye contact with those assembled for worship, appropriate hand gestures and body movements, and spoke using a natural and pleasant sounding voice. At times his tone came across as a little harsh when depicting the exchange between God and Moses; however we understand that in this section of the sermon he was describing a unique and precarious moment in salvation history.

“Our Mediator” is written in the 4-part style that has been taught at Calvin Seminary for almost two decades. It faithfully reflects the trouble in the text, the trouble in our lives, the grace in the text, and the grace which, then, extends into our lives as contemporary Christians. The initial “hook” that Bart employs is the idea of a referee in hockey or perhaps another sport that is able to “mediate” the game. This role is important because two teams, being competitors, cannot really mediate the game themselves. This then sets the stage for the text which demonstrates the need for a mediator between the LORD and his people.

In this sermon, Bart wisely reveals the broader context of the book of Exodus and shows how the assigned text fits into a larger narrative. In the background of this passage is the disastrous incident of the golden calf in which the Israelites sought a worship experience that fit with what they were familiar with having lived for generations as part of an idol worshipping culture in Egypt. This was a great act of disobedience and God was appropriately angry with the Israelites. Bart shows how we, in our culture, can also seek worship that is on our own terms. We too are disobedient before God and, like the Israelites in ancient times, require a mediator. Bart demonstrates that Moses, the mediator between the LORD and the Israelites in the time of the text, is a foreshadowing of Christ who is the ultimate mediator between a holy God and his disobedient children.

There are three things that we wish to note about this sermon. First of all, comparing the need for a referee in competitive sports to our need as sinful human beings for a spiritual mediator was creative. The references to hockey were probably effective at engaging the interest of many in the congregation, but perhaps not everyone. Secondly, while Bart did convincingly communicate that Jesus is our mediator, he did not explicitly reference any New Testament passages that speak of this. For example, 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is “one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus”. Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24 name Jesus as the “mediator of a new covenant”. Referencing passages such as these would have added to the sermon. Third, in the actual delivery of the sermon Bart often strayed significantly from the text of the manuscript that was submitted. While it is commendable that Bart is not tied to his notes while preaching we were surprised to see how often his spoken word was different from what had been written down.

In addition to reviewing this sermon we also read two additional sermons: “Jesus Loves Even Me” based on Titus 3:1-8 and “How Then Shall We Pray?” based on Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 117. These sermons were positively received. In summary, on the basis of the sermons submitted, we consider Candidate Bart Eisen to be a capable and talented preacher.

Humbly submitted,

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