

# Sola Lectionary Text Study

## Advent 1

November 29, 2020 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

In Scripture garments denote righteousness and unrighteousness.  
White garments in Scripture signify righteousness.  
Soiled garments are unrighteousnesses. Thus  
all our righteousnesses are a polluted  
garment, they have been  
dragged up from filth.  
– Martin Luther –  
Commentary on Isaiah 64:6

### Isaiah 64:1–9

Israel cried out to the Lord to come down from heaven and take on their adversaries. The Lord’s power is so mighty that it even shakes the mountains. It was this power that the people were begging for, even as they confessed their unworthiness and uncleanness.

The word used to signify Israel’s unclean state is (נדח) *nid-ah* in Hebrew. The word refers to a woman’s menstruation. Jewish law/tradition prevents women who are having their monthly period to be unable to be in the temple. They are ritually unclean until they visit the Mikveh (the ritual bath). This analogy points to Israel’s false piety. They were just going through the motions of worshiping the Lord. Their hearts were not truly in it, hence they were unclean.

- In what ways do we “go through the motions” of the faith like Israel did? Why is this something for us to repent?

Isaiah 64:6–7 is a confession of sin, “in our sins we have been a long time... we have become like one who is unclean... there is no one who calls upon your name.” Their confession of sin was followed by an acknowledgement that God is the potter and Israel is the clay that is formed by his hand.

- In what ways does God form us through forgiveness and mercy? How is our acknowledgement of our sin an invitation for the potter to shape us into who he wants us to be?

### Psalms 80:1–7

The psalmist centered this hymn around Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob. Joseph had an important role in feeding the tribes of Jacob during the famine in Egypt. God led young Joseph through the bitterness of sibling rivalry, and his brothers’ plot to do away with him for good. Out of Joseph and his brothers, God created his vine that was led through the wilderness and replanted in the Promised Land.

- How was Joseph’s life important for the sustainability of Israel? Why is our family history important for our lives today?

The psalmist goes on, asking for the Lord to deliver the Northern tribes of Israel (Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh) who have been made a laughingstock by their neighbors. He pleads for God to stop being angry with them and to rescue them from harm.

- How did the Psalmist know that God was angry with his people? Do you ever think about God being angry with us today?

### 1 Corinthians 1:3–9

Spiritual gifts have often been a source of strife within

the church, debating over who has what and who doesn’t. Assessing the giftedness of others or taking pride in our own gifts all too often creates a hierarchy among believers. This was certainly the case among the Christians in Corinth. Their constant ranking and comparison led to endless conflict in the congregation. Addressing that conflict was a key purpose of Paul’s letters to the Corinthian congregation. Right at the beginning, he made a declaration about spiritual gifts, giving thanks that they are not lacking in any gift. This pronouncement leveled the hierarchy the Corinthians had so carefully constructed.

- What comes to mind when you hear a term like “spiritual gifts”? Do you think of some people as more spiritually gifted than others?
- How do you understand the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit? How do the gifts of the Spirit aid us during Advent as we wait for the Christ’s kingdom to come?

### Mark 13:24–37

Speculation about the end times has been a preoccupation of Christians since the day of Christ’s ascension. Wondering, watching, and waiting have been the lot of the people of God. In every generation there has been someone who couldn’t resist the temptation to interpret signs and events and start the clock running on Christ’s return. And every generation has passed on, still waiting for the day of the Lord.

- In what sense can a preoccupation with timelines and prediction of the end times stem from a lack of faith?

As he was approaching his crucifixion, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the coming of a new age, but he did not give them many details. He warned them of signs and spoke of budding trees heralding spring, but he gave them no timeline. He simply told them to stay awake, keep their eyes open, and to be ready. There are no days off for God’s chosen ones. We are called to be in a perpetual state of readiness.

- What does it look like to be ready for the return of Christ? Is the coming of Christ something for us to fear? What kinds of signs do you expect to signify Christ’s return?

Jesus spoke of the angels coming to gather his elect. The image of election can be disconcerting at times. It carries with it the fear of being absolutely without control of our situation. It certainly sounds as if everything, the timing of the new kingdom, the signs that will precede it, and who will be received into it, is in God’s hands.

- Why does the notion that the future is in God’s hands and not ours cause us to worry? Might there be comfort in that?