

Sola Lectionary Text Study

Advent 2

December 4, 2022



And as it went with John, so it still goes, from the beginning of the world until the end. For such conceited piety will not be told that it must first and foremost prepare the way of the Lord, imagining itself to sit in God's lap.

- Martin Luther -

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.

Isaiah 11: 1-10

The "Standard" of any organization is the basis of judgment by which all others are measured. There has to be something to compare other things to in order to make a sound decision in important matters. Isaiah speaks of the shoot that will sprout from the stump of Jesse. This shoot will stand as a sign for all people, it will be the standard or marker for all to look at and follow. This standard will make judgments with righteousness, which will not be righteousness in a worldly sense of what is right, but with the divine sense. Faithfulness, a right relationship with God, will define this righteousness.

- *How is God's righteous judgment unlike our human judgment?*
- *What standards are you used to upholding in your work and faith life?*

In the military, the Standard Bearer is the one who carries the flag or emblem of the unit. He (or she) lifts the flag high for all to see and that symbol becomes a focal point and a rallying cry for what binds the group together. The Standard Bearer also is the one who goes first and the troops dutifully follow.

- *How is Jesus the Standard Bearer for all humanity?*
- *Can we ever live up to the standard that Jesus sets? How is God merciful to us when we don't measure up?*

Psalm 72

Psalm 72 offers a prayer that God would gift Israel's king with a thirst for justice and righteousness. With a right heart, the king's reign will be marked by prosperity and dominion. His foes will bow down before him. All of this is attributed, not to the king's power, but to his righteousness. On account of his justice and mercy, God will bless the king with long life and abundance. David's prayer for his son Solomon is that he will walk in the way of the Lord and so be blessed.

- *How does this prayer reflect or not reflect how we might pray for our political leaders?*
- *How does it reflect or not reflect the kinds of blessings we might want for ourselves?*

Romans 15: 4-13

Here in Romans, Paul gives us an important insight into the purpose and function of Scripture. It is written that we might have hope. Where he could have made a declaration about

its authority, he instead speaks of the encouragement it brings to believers.

- *How does Scripture give you hope? How does it encourage you in your life?*

Paul goes on to remind the Romans that Christ Jesus has come to unify believers, both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. The lines that had divided Jew and Gentile were erased in Christ. He welcomed both into his kingdom without distinction. Paul prayed that this knowledge would bring unity to the household of faith, that they might welcome one another as they had been welcomed. This unity was one way to glorify God and give thanks for his mercy.

- *What are some ways our unity or disunity as the people of God reflect back on God? What message does it send to the world?*

Matthew 3: 1-12

In preparation for the coming of the Messiah, John the Baptist called the people of Judea to repent. In a style reminiscent of Elijah, John spoke of the new day that was dawning. He baptized all who showed up at the Jordan confessing their sins. But to those who showed up without proper repentance, John had a different word. Calling them a brood of vipers, he warned that the judgment of God was drawing near. Their confidence in their ancestral heritage was no substitute for true repentance and faith.

- *What do you think drew all those people out to the Jordan River?*
- *What is the relationship between John's baptism and Christian baptism?*

Despite his popularity and the power that went with it, John knew that someone more powerful than he was on the way. John wasn't even worthy to carry his sandals. John's power was nothing compared to the one who was coming. John's baptism with water for repentance was going to give way to a new baptism, a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. John explained that the chief task of the Messiah would be to separate the wheat from the chaff. The wheat would be gathered in, but the chaff would be burned. This separating of the righteous and unrighteous, the chosen and the unchosen, the blessed and the cursed would mark the new day being ushered in by the coming of the Messiah.

- *Why did John need to clearly explain that he was not the Messiah?*
- *In what ways do you think that what Jesus did was or was not what John expected him to do?*