



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.

“(Christ) makes it so that we consider it of no consequence, even though the whole world contends against us.

“The rule of the church is not located in pomp and appearance but in the Word, even in the spoken Word, on which we may stand firm against all insults.

For ‘if God is for us, who is against us?’”

–Martin Luther–
Lectures on Isaiah, LW 17

Isaiah 42:14–21

It seems that God’s plans would be more easily implemented if he chose better people to carry them out. But all he has to work with is a bunch of sinners. In this passage from Isaiah we see God taking upon himself the task he had first given to his servant Israel. Despite being chosen and beloved by God, his people proved no less blind, no less deaf, no less prone to idolatry than anyone else. These verses point us ahead to when God will take on flesh in Jesus Christ and his work of salvation will finally be complete.

- In what ways are we like those who look but do not see, or those who listen but do not hear? How is that changed when God himself opens our eyes and ears?
- In what ways has God managed to open your eyes and ears in your life? What means does he use?
- What are some of the “cast images” we are prone to worship as our gods? What makes idolatry so easy to slip into?

Psalms 142

The Psalms often give voice to our most joyous praise and our darkest lament. They hold nothing back in the name of decorum. In today’s Psalm, we hear a bold cry for help from one who is lost. The Psalmist’s unrelenting plea reflects confidence that God has the power to deliver his people.

- What do the Psalms show us about how God would have us pray? Does it seem strange or uncomfortable to make such direct requests of God?
- Do our more timid prayers reflect less confidence in what God can do? How does God himself encourage us to be bold in our prayers?

Ephesians 5:8–14

One of the greatest challenges that comes with our freedom in Christ is sorting out how to live in this life. Every day we are faced with decisions and choices in which we have to discern the right path.

In this passage from Ephesians we get a glimpse of what the Christian life looks like. For those who follow Jesus, life in this world is about living as children of light. We are called to put aside the ways of darkness and bear the fruit of light in the world. The problem for sinners is that we are not as good at discerning light and darkness as we need to be. And we’re not always great at discerning good fruit from empty calories. The Christian life is one of constant

seeking to determine what actions reflect Christ’s love to our neighbors. It isn’t easy. But the Christian life is also marked by the holy and certain hope that we are daily being forgiven for Jesus’ sake.

- What are some things that make it complicated for us to sort out good fruit from empty calories?
- What is easy about loving our neighbor? What is difficult?
- What are some ways of speaking of the Christian life without undermining the promise of the Gospel?

John 9:1–41

The question that Jesus’ disciples asked showed their ideas about how God works in the world. For a man to have been born blind, someone had to have sinned, or so they surmised. Either the man or his parents had to be responsible for his plight. Jesus, however, rejects their premise, stating that it is not nearly so simple as that. Instead, this man’s blindness is going to prove to be an opportunity for God’s power to be displayed.

- How do you understand the relationship between particular sins and particular hardships?
- What do you think about the statement that the man’s blindness served a purpose for God? Does that seem just?

When his neighbors saw the formerly blind man, they weren’t even sure it was really him. Their certainty that a person could not be healed of blindness was part of their confusion. But it is also possible that they had never truly seen the blind man. His presence among them had been such a source of discomfort that they couldn’t even look at him.

- What sorts of people do we prefer not to notice? In what ways are we blind to people around us who are in need?

A recurring theme in this story of the man born blind is that those who think they see clearly are the most blind to what is happening right in front of them. The man who is healed doesn’t claim to understand what has happened or how Jesus was able to accomplish this healing. He just knows that he had been blind and now he could see. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were certain they knew how God would act in the world, and Jesus didn’t conform to their model.

- How does our religious “knowledge” sometimes get in the way of what God is doing in the world?
- In what ways do we claim to know more about God than we actually know?