



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.

“Faith closes its eyes and commits the manner and the way and the method of preserving to God. Thus, in all perils, Christian wisdom walks with closed eyes and does not take offense.”

“The Christian way is to despair of all counsels and wisdom, to commit everything to God alone, and to walk the unknown way.”

–Martin Luther–

Lectures on Isaiah, LW 17

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Lord speaks to the prophet Ezekiel asking him if the bones that lay before him in this valley can live. Ezekiel replied, “You alone know, Lord.” Humanly speaking, of course, some old dry, brittle, barren bones cannot be brought back to life. It is utterly impossible for humans to revive anything that is dead, but for God, nothing is impossible.

- How is Ezekiel’s response to the Lord’s question a confession of faith?

The Lord told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones. “Tell them!” he said. God told the prophet to proclaim to the dead bones that He would bring them back to life, that their communal death would be no more, that Israel would be brought back to their land and live again as a nation. God’s Word brings life out of death; all God has to do to bring about resurrection and new life is to speak it into being.

- It is God’s will that life should be brought out of death. But what does God want Israel to realize and confess in the face of their resurrection? What does God want us to confess about our lives?

Psalms 130

The Psalmist cried out to the Lord and waited with hope and eager expectation for the Lord to answer his plea. The psalmist knew himself well enough to know that he could not stand before God based on his own merits. He knew that if God was tallying up sins, no one had reason for hope. But he also trusted that, finally, God would be merciful, and he was. It is God’s mercy that separates him from all other supposed gods. As the psalmist cried out to God for relief, he awaited his answer in faith, trusting in the character of the Lord as one of lovingkindness and mercy.

- Does the psalmist take God’s mercy for granted, or are his expectations rooted in God’s faithfulness? How do you know?
- What are some ways we live as if we think we can stand before God based on our own merits?

Romans 8:1-11

Drawing on his previous argument in chapter 5:16-18, Paul proclaimed that there is no condemnation for those who live in Christ Jesus. As judgment arose out of the sin of Adam, a sin that all humanity shares in, so through one man’s righteousness is the condemnation wiped away. Jesus, though he was sinless, made himself an offering for sin and

through that he condemned sin rather than condemning the sinful.

- What does it mean to be condemned? In what ways are we now free from that condemnation?

In a crucial theological move, Paul also makes clear that the law is powerless to bring salvation. God in Jesus Christ intervened in the world to accomplish what the law could never accomplish — the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

- What are some ways we still seek salvation through the law? Why does it seem so much easier to accept the law rather than God’s grace?

John 11:1-45 (46-53)

Mary and Martha’s brother, Lazarus, became seriously ill while Jesus was away from their home town of Bethany. The sisters sent for Jesus but he did not hurry back, instead he took his time returning, saying that this sickness will not lead to death, but will reveal the glory of God. However, when Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead and in the grave for four days. There is a theological significance to being dead for four days. The ancient Jews thought that a person’s soul remained near their body for the first three days after death. According to Jewish Midrash, death was only final after the third day.

- How does this story of Lazarus being dead for four days show God’s power in light of Jewish thought?

In conversation with his disciples, Jesus declared that Lazarus was dead and not simply asleep. Both sisters greeted him by saying, “If you had been here, our brother would not have died.” They hesitated to allow him to open the tomb because of the stench of the dead body. Jesus responded to their uncertainty, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

- Why can we only see God’s glory when we truly believe?
- Have there been times in your life when you have thought God’s presence has been delayed too long?

Finally, after the experience of grief has already shrouded Jesus and his friends, Jesus does what he came to Bethany to do. With nothing but his word, he called Lazarus back from the realm of death. The power of his word breaks even the chains of death. From this moment forward the leaders of the people would look for ways to destroy Jesus.

- Why would Jesus’ power over life and death be such a problem for the religious leaders??