

Pentecost 4 (Proper 7)

June 21, 2026



Temptation is a most useful thing... (it) becomes a servant when we resist it, because it then produces a hatred of iniquity and a love of righteousness. And in our future immortal body it will neither have dominion nor rule, nor will it be a servant.

– Martin Luther –

Lectures on Romans, LW 25:319

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.

Jeremiah 20:7-13

These verses give us a key insight into the nature of Jeremiah's ministry, as well as how he felt about his calling as a prophet. This was not something he had chosen, or even would have been interested in choosing, but a burden placed upon him by God himself, from which he knew he would never be free.

- *Why did Jeremiah wish he could cease being a prophet, and just keep his mouth shut? Have you ever wondered if life might actually be easier apart from faith?*
- *In verse 7, of what does Jeremiah accuse God?*

In the story of the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), the two disciples speak of their experience in hearing Jesus words by saying, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

- *How did Jeremiah use a similar metaphor in verse 20:9? Did Jeremiah experience this "burning" as a positive or negative thing?*

In the midst of his fears and misgivings, this lesson ends with a strong statement of faith from Jeremiah. His words are ones of strength and victory, in spite of circumstances that suggest the opposite.

- *Given the pain and hardship we often experience in faith, what is the Gospel promise in which we live? What assurance does God give us?*

Psalms 91:1-10 (11-16)

This psalm is an expression of trust in God's protection and rescue. Multiple metaphors are used to describe the refuge and safety we find in the Lord, including the image of a protective fortress, deliverance from a hunter's snare, the shelter of a mother-bird's wings, and a shield in hand-to-hand battle.

- *Which of these metaphors do you most resonate with? Why? How might each be applicable in different situations of life?*
- *Is this psalm suggesting that nothing bad will ever happen to people of faith? Or is there a deeper promise here?*

Romans 6:12-23

In this text, Paul confronts the inevitable false assumption that people often make when presented with the Gospel of grace. "If our sins are forgiven, why not go on sinning..."

- *How does this question itself show a lack of spiritual maturity on the part of the one arguing?*

Paul responds in a straightforward and sensible manner. Forgiveness and grace is not given to us by God to make it easier for us to sin, but as the means by which we would have the opportunity to struggle *against* sin.

- *In your actual faith experience, does being forgiven make you want to sin more? How does God's forgiveness give us hope that our sin can be conquered?*

Matthew 10:5a, 21-33

A lesson like this one is troubling to our modern sensibilities. Talk of persecution, hatred, and the rejection of family are difficult enough, but talk of the devil and hell add to the supernatural proportions of the tension Jesus describes in these verses. Far from being a soft and reassuring scene painted in pastel colors, this passage of Scripture confronts our assumptions about an easy faith.

- *In what sense does this passage illustrate and elaborate what Jesus meant when he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)?*

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus warns his disciples that they will face times of persecution. There are certainly places in the world where being a Christian can cost one his life. But it is often hard for many who do not face such circumstances to understand what real persecution is.

- *When have you experienced genuine hatred from others because of your faith? Or would you say you haven't?*

The word "atheism" comes from the Greek words meaning "without God." Many self-proclaimed atheists spend a lot of time discussing, stressing, and speaking against the concept of God. Their actual faith perspective might better be described as "anti-theism" ("against God").

- *In your experience, are those who vocally espouse atheism people who are disinterested in the subject of faith? How is their view a form of religion, not unlike others?*
- *Is atheism simply an indifference toward God and faith? Or is there something more intentional and sinister about unbelief? Who is the "master" being worshiped?*

In the Small Catechism and the explanation to the Ten Commandments, Martin Luther repeatedly uses the phrase "We should fear and love God so that ..."

- *How do Jesus' words in this lesson show us that God is one worthy of our fear and love? How do both of these come together only in faith?*