



The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children no matter how furiously sin may rage within us, so long as we follow the Spirit and struggle against sin in order to kill it. Because nothing is so effective in deadening the flesh as the cross and suffering.

-Martin Luther-

Commentary on Romans

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.

Exodus 17:1-7

It is difficult to imagine being saved from slavery in Egypt and then so quickly resort to complaining against God and expressing a desire to be back in Egypt. The people of Israel almost seem like a caricature in this section of Exodus. God has gone to great lengths to rescue them from Egypt, but their minds are filled with the thought that they were much better off in captivity. They are convinced that the God who just saved them has now forsaken them.

It isn't so unusual for us to question God's presence with us when we are faced with difficulty. Despite being saved from sin and death, we sometimes grumble, wondering why God doesn't do more for us.

- *Is it unreasonable for the people of Israel to think God will or should provide for their needs in the wilderness? What makes Egypt seem appealing to them?*
- *How do we get caught in sin when trials abound in our lives? Why are we so quick to forget all the good God has done for us?*

Psalms 95:1-9

The psalmist warns the people about hardening their hearts like their wilderness ancestors did at Massah and Meribah. He quotes the Lord who said his people put him to the test even though they knew of his goodness and had experienced it first hand. The Israelites' complaining only resulted in God's wrath.

- *Why is it important that we remain responsive and in touch with God's goodness and mercy in our lives?*

Romans 5:1-8

St. Paul explains that a result of justification is peace with God. This implies that, apart from being justified, there is not peace between us and God. As believers, we might have a hard time imagining not being at peace with God, but sin is exactly that. It is rebellion against God. It is destroying the peaceful relationship between Creator and creature.

- *What are some signs of the broken peace between us and God?*

Paul speaks of rejoicing in suffering. This is a rather baffling attitude. Few of us would pair up rejoicing and suffering. Suffering is something we go to great lengths to avoid. And yet, we are not successful in avoiding it. Suffering enters into every life. Paul's rejoicing is not driven by a love of suffering. Rather it arises from the hope that has been poured into him in the midst of suffering.

- *Does suffering automatically produce hope? What good Word do we have for those in whom suffering leads to despair?*

In some of the most shocking words of Scripture, Paul explained that Christ's work in the cross was work done for sinners. This was not carried out for the righteous — those who have no need of Christ. His death is for weak sinners who do not deserve it.

- *What does Christ's death for sinners tell us about God?*
- *Why does the notion that Christ died for those who do not deserve it bother us so much? What if even we are undeserving?*

John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42)

When Jesus came to the well, the Samaritan woman had no idea who she was talking to or what he was talking about. As we read this exchange we can see the many places she missed the point of what he was saying. He spoke of giving her living water and she pointed out that he didn't even have a bucket. He explained that those who receive his water will never thirst again and she was relieved by the thought of not having to haul water every day. She was deaf to the deeper meaning of Jesus' words.

- *How does this woman's certainty of what she knows get in the way of her hearing what Jesus is saying?*
- *How does our human "knowledge" get in our way when we are confronted with God's Word?*

In speaking to a Samaritan woman, Jesus defied many of the social conventions of the day. He demonstrated that the work he came to do was going to extend to people normally considered outside the realm of God's mercy. Even Samaritans, women, and people of low character would come to know God's mercy. The new life Jesus came to bring would not be reserved for a select few.

- *Who, in our time, might fall into the same categories as the Samaritan woman?*
- *What obstacles do we face in bringing the Word to people on the margins?*

Jesus spoke of a life-giving water that will quench thirst once and for all. Those who receive what he is bringing will have everlasting life. Jesus also explicitly identified himself as the Messiah. When speaking with this woman who had no reason to think she would have a place in God's plans, Jesus revealed a great deal about who he was and what he was up to.

- *What is this life-giving water? How do we get it?*