



*For if you believe that by this seed the serpent has been slain, then it is slain for you; and if you believe that in this seed all nations are to be blessed, then you are also blessed. For each one individually should have crushed the serpent under foot and redeemed himself from the curse, which would have been too difficult, nay impossible for us.*

– Martin Luther –  
Sermon for Easter Day

### 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.*

#### Acts 10:34-43

The extension of God's promises and mercies to the Gentiles marks a radical new direction for the message of the cross. The salvation brought about in Christ Jesus, through his death and resurrection, is not only for a small group of people or a single nation. Rather, it is the salvation of all — people of every race and tongue. Biblically, the word for "nations" (eJne: ethne) was the same word used to refer to the unbelieving "Gentiles" (i.e., non-Jews).

Peter's speech in Acts highlights this extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles. God, who raised Jesus from the dead, shows no partiality to a certain race or tongue. He chooses people from all peoples, making them his own through the preaching of Christ.

- *Why is it significant that the Gospel is extended to the Gentiles? Where does that leave the people of Israel?*
- *What is our role in bringing the Good News to the nations?*

#### Psalm 16

The psalmist declares that he has no good apart from the Lord. God alone is the source of his strength, protection, and blessing. It is easy for us to come up with alternative explanations for the good things that happen to us. Our hard work, our endurance, our skill, and even our luck — these are all given credit for the good we experience. But the psalmist knew that none of that counts for anything apart from God. Salvation is found only in him.

- *Is our hard work or endurance or skill irrelevant to our experiences in this life? What does God have to do with that?*
- *Why is it important to recognize and confess that, ultimately, all our blessings come from God?*

#### Colossians 3:1-4

Christians are often tempted to float off into the realm of the spiritual, to cast off earthly concerns in favor of higher pursuits. At first glance, passages like this from Colossians might seem to encourage such endeavors. As Christians, we are exhorted to set our minds on the things above, rather than the things of this earth. It is easy to fall into the ditch of "spiritualism."

But this passage must be understood in its proper context. The Colossians are being courted by those who encourage a "philosophy" that will lead to a higher understanding. This philosophical quest is turning the Colossians away from

the one in whom life is truly to be found. The exhortation we find here in Chapter 3 is to give up earthly pursuits of spirituality in favor of clinging to Christ. It is Christ who has defeated death; it is in Christ that believers find their lives.

- *In what ways does "spiritualism" continue to provide a temptation for Christians? How can attempts to seek a "higher understanding" turn us away from Christ?*
- *In what sense do we already participate in the resurrection? In what ways is it also still a future reality for us?*

#### Matthew 28:1-10

When we consider the long and detailed gospel accounts of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, the brevity of the Easter story is rather shocking. The event that is at the heart of the Christian faith is summed up in a handful of verses. The simple declaration that Jesus has been raised from the dead is only a few words. But that is no accident. Once death has been defeated, once Jesus has broken free from the tomb, there is little more to say. God's ancient promise of salvation is fulfilled in this remarkable event. It is as simple and as profound as that.

- *Do you think the resurrection accounts are brief because they are less important than the crucifixion? Explain.*

The angel in the tomb had two instructions for the women: come and see; go and tell. The women were invited right into the burial chamber to see the place Jesus had occupied. They were invited to see for themselves that Jesus was no longer there. Once they had seen, they were to go and tell. They were to bear witness to Jesus' defeat of death. They were to be the ones who first delivered the Good News to Jesus' beloved disciples.

- *What do you think it would have been like to walk right into Jesus' empty tomb? What significance do you find in the women being given the task of bearing the news of the resurrection to Jesus' other disciples?*

The angel tells the women not to be afraid. Even though they are witnessing something beyond their understanding— even though the guards at the tomb are frozen in fear —these women are told not to fear. When they leave the tomb to go and tell, Matthew tells us they went with "fear and great joy." The wonder of the resurrection was still a mystery to them, but the joy of salvation had started to creep in.

- *Have you ever experienced joy and fear simultaneously? What kinds of circumstances create that combination of emotions?*
- *Does the resurrection story still capture your heart?*