



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.

First Lesson: *Isaiah 49:1-7*

In this Messianic prophecy, God's faithful servant is described as his "secret weapon" by which he would bring his people back to him. This servant would be concealed from the knowledge of others, hidden away until it was time to be born. But there is more! This servant will not only restore Israel to God, but also be a light to the nations. God's saving plan in Christ is for all people, to the ends of the earth.

- Is it blindness on our part or the fact that God chooses to reveal his plan when the time is right? How might it be both?*

It is amazing how God is always busy working to restore his people to himself. Once the light to the nations is revealed, there is no more "in secret." The nations and people from far away are called upon to heed the word that Isaiah will speak on God's behalf. This light cannot be hidden from view, but rather draws attention, brings knowledge, and leads the way.

- When and in what ways has God revealed his will for you?*
- How is the true light of God specifically revealed in Christ?*

Psalm 40:1-11

The Psalmist was given a song to sing to the people of Israel. Because God had intervened and rescued him from the pit, a song of praise was now ever on the psalmist's lips. He recognized that the Lord, alone, was the source of his salvation. False gods could do nothing for him. He further understood that his only hope was in God's continued mercy, steadfast love, and faithfulness. This was the heart of his faith and his song.

The person of faith does not hide or conceal God's grace (v. 10), but rather, openly praises God for his faithfulness and salvation. Like the proverbial city on the hill, once God's plan is revealed there is no denying the goodness of the Lord, it cannot be concealed or hidden from view. This is how the gospel serves as its own motivation.

When something is really good in our lives we don't want to hide it, we want to shout from the rooftops the numerous blessings we have received. We want to praise God for all the wonders he has created.

- Why do we conceal some things in our lives from others and reveal other things? What is at the root of this hiding and exposing? How does this happen in our lives of faith, as well?*

What makes the wonders of God so "wonder-full" is that

In the eyes of the world these words cannot be convincing, because their meaning becomes clear only by faith.

- Martin Luther -

Luther's Works 17:169 (Lectures on Isaiah)

they are beyond our human ability to accomplish. The extraordinary character of God's works makes us "wonder" at them.

- What things instill in you a sense of wonder and awe? How is such wonder an essential part of faith?*

Second Lesson: *1 Corinthians 1:1-9*

Paul begins his first letter to the Corinthians with a word of thanks for the grace that has been showered upon the Christians in Corinth. He jumps right into an issue that will be a central element of the epistle - spiritual gifts. Paul tips his hand right from the start with the simple, direct declaration that the Corinthians are not lacking in any spiritual gift. They have been given all that they need in order to remain steadfast until the day of the Lord.

Shifting the focus from what we will learn is a chief preoccupation of the Corinthians - themselves - Paul immediately points to the true source of their sanctification. Because God is faithful, the Corinthians will be found blameless.

- What is the significance of shifting the Corinthian's attention from themselves and onto thoughts of Christ? How do we need that in our lives, daily?*

Gospel Lesson: *John 1:29-42*

John confesses that he did not recognize Jesus as he came to him to be baptized, but this was so that he would be revealed to Israel. But as Jesus is baptized, John hears the voice of God proclaiming that this is his Son and he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John sees the Spirit descend like a dove on Jesus and tells the crowds that this is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (the same words we sing in the *Agnus Dei* of the Communion liturgy).

Others also saw something in Jesus. Upon hearing the Baptist's declaration, they follow Jesus, convinced that they had found the Messiah. Andrew, Simon Peter, and a third disciple are anxious to see what Jesus is going to do. Their quick recognition of him as Messiah will become confused as Jesus goes about his work in ways they do not understand.

- Think about the words of the Lamb of God that we sing before Holy Communion. What does it mean that Jesus takes away the sin of the world? And yours?*
- In what ways do you stand in awe of the grace of God poured out for you as you partake of the body and blood of Christ?*