



The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.

– Augsburg Confession, Article VII –

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 4:32–35

Normally, the First Reading on Sunday features a text from the Old Testament. As we shall see over the next several weeks, during the season of Easter, lessons are taken from the Book of Acts.

- What does the Book of Acts have in common with the historical narratives of the Old Testament? In what sense do the ordinary people we read about in Acts share the same faith we do?

These verses give us a brief look into the life of the early church. Imagine a whole group of people who shared everything and were of one heart and mind! It seems like a dream, some sort of utopia to us who see and experience so much selfishness and discord. Even in the churches we are a part of, to be of one heart and one mind is a remarkable thing. This is the picture that Luke paints of the early church under the leadership of the apostles, and what we aspire to.

- In what ways is the description of the church in these verses similar to the church today? In what ways is it different? What do you make of that? Was there ever a “perfect” congregation?

This text also gives us a glimpse into our mutual stewardship of God’s gifts in faith. “No one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own,” Scripture says; rather all shared everything they had and there was not one person in need among the group. Furthermore, people actually sold their property and possessions and donated it to the common good of the fellowship.

- What would cause such devotion and faithfulness toward one another? In what sense are faith (trust in God) and generosity (a willingness to give) related to one another?
- What is the difference between giving from our “disposable income” (extra money we may have), and actually giving up something for the sake of another? Which is more in the spirit of Jesus’ own sacrifice?

Psalms 148

In this psalm, the singer called upon creation itself to give praise to God — not simply human beings and angels, but elements and weather, the heavenly bodies, as well as the land, trees, animals, and all that fills the earth and skies.

- Jesus said if all people were silent, the very stones themselves would sing his praise (Luke 19:40). In what sense do even the voiceless and inanimate parts of creation give God glory?
- Verse 6 speaks of God’s “law” being given to the sun, moon, and stars of heaven? What do you think this means? In what sense can the study of natural science be a recognition of

God’s majesty, and an expression of faith?

1 John 1:1–2:2

Picture a room where it is so dark that you cannot even see your hand in front of your face. It is disconcerting and disorienting to be surrounded by pitch black. Even if there are items in the room to be seen, they cannot be detected because of the profound absence of light. Darkness can harm, not because it is a “thing” in itself, but because it is a lack of a thing. Just the smallest, briefest flicker of something like a lit match can dispel the darkness and give the eyes much to observe.

- In what way is sin like darkness in our lives?

“God is light,” proclaimed John in this epistle, and in God is no darkness whatsoever. Where there is light, even the tiniest ray, there cannot be darkness. So it is with God, asserted the evangelist; if God is present, then there is light. Where there are places of darkness in our lives, they give testimony to our need for Christ and his forgiveness.

- Have you ever experienced emotional or spiritual darkness that enveloped you like a pitch black room? How has the spoken or written Word of God served to bring light to your darkness?

John 20:19–31

Behind locked doors, the disciples got the surprise of their lives: Jesus appeared to them once again. Perhaps by now they were wondering what was going on, having heard from Mary Magdalene that she had seen the Lord. Jesus came among them and offered them a sign of peace. Moments before they were hiding in terror, and now they were seeing Jesus’ nail torn hands, and wounded side. It had to be a lot for them to wrap their minds around — things like this simply do not happen. Jesus said it a second time, “Peace be with you.” Then he commissioned them and gave them the gift of the Spirit. Along with that gift comes the authority to bind and loose sin in his name.

- How is the forgiveness of sins so important to the disciples’ ministry? How is it of the utmost importance to our ministry?
- In what ways are God’s “peace” and “forgiveness” inextricably intertwined?
- Reflect again on the question from the Acts lesson about devotion and faithfulness. How might the community of believers be different if God’s forgiveness is used as a resource that we generously share with each other?