



## Epiphany 3

January 26, 2025 (Year C)

### 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.

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith.*

—Martin Luther—  
Small Catechism

### Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

After the exile of God's people in Babylon, Ezra the scribe had returned to Jerusalem. This was about 14 years before Nehemiah returned to rebuild the city wall. Ezra found that the spiritual condition of those who had remained in Jerusalem (as well as those who returned from exile) was in a dismal state.

In this lesson, we see how Ezra was diligent in his task of teaching the Book of the Law, the Torah, to the people. It was hard for the people to understand at first, but with the help of a worshipping community of faith, their spiritual and moral lives were vitalized.

- *In what ways does knowing the Word of God aid our spiritual maturity? Why is the constant exposure to the Bible central to the health of our faith?*

One of the drawbacks of becoming a believer as an adult is a lack of exposure to the biblical story. This happens as well, when the community of faith fails to teach the faith narrative to our youngest disciples. The result is often a case of fear that prevents, otherwise intelligent adults, from asking for help in reading and interpreting the Bible.

- *How can the faith community assist new believers, or those who have very little confidence in their biblical knowledge, to learn and grow in the Word?*

A lack of confidence often intimidates otherwise willing servants from attending Bible studies or teaching children. Sometimes we hear words of embarrassment such as "I feel dumb because I don't know anything about the Bible."

- *How do we convince those who feel like they don't know enough about the Bible to be courageous and dig in and learn more? How can we apply hospitality to Bible study?*

### Psalms 19:(1-6) 7-14

- *If you had to choose one material thing that was most precious, what would it be? Likewise, if you had to identify the sweetest, most delightful thing to eat, what would it be?*

The psalmist proclaimed that the law of the Lord is perfect and revives the human soul. God's Word brings about joy and wisdom. David asserted that the law of the Lord is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey — there is nothing on earth that is more precious or more delightful.

- *In what ways do we crave sweets, treats, and wealth? Have you ever felt that way about God — yearning for more of his Word and comfort? What is it that satisfies your spiritual hunger?*

- *Can you detect spiritual hunger in other people? What does it look like when you see it?*

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Some gifts within the body of Christ may seem more attractive and important than others, depending on your own viewpoint. Perhaps that's because we tend to put value on what others are able to do rather than seeing clearly what God is doing with the gifts he has given us.

- *Are spiritual gifts something to be envious of? What helps you to celebrate the gifts in others that you yourself may not have?*

Paul made it very clear: there are no inferior gifts in the Body of Christ. All gifts are needed, just as all parts of the human body are important for the proper functioning of the system.

- *Think of the human body and how when one system of the body becomes compromised, it affects all of the other systems. How have you seen that to be true in the church?*

### Luke 4:16-30

Jesus was rejected by his hometown people after he read from the scroll in the synagogue. They questioned his identity wondering where he obtained the authority to proclaim release of the captives and good news to the poor. Who did he think he was anyway? They were insulted by his words and attitude. Jesus saw their shortcomings and urged them to hear the good news rather than reject it.

- *The people of Nazareth thought they knew Jesus; what did they not know? In what ways are we most vulnerable to pride when we think we have all the answers already?*

Jesus voiced their unspoken complaints; he knew they wanted to see signs like those he had performed elsewhere.

- *What makes us think that being given a sign from God will take away all our questions and doubts?*

People often ask: "Why don't we see miracles today like God did in the days of the Bible?" Some even suggest that this is evidence that the Bible is fiction.

- *Why do you think God is intentionally "stingy" with giving miraculous signs? What is the weakness of a faith that is dependent upon supernatural "evidence"?*
- *If a person does not believe in God based on his Word, will supernatural signs really help? Compare what Scripture says in Luke 16:29-31.*