

Sola Lectionary Text Study

Pentecost 12 (Proper 14)

August 11, 2024



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.

“Walk in love,” counsels the apostle. He would have our external life be all love. But not the world’s love is to be our pattern, which seeks only its own advantage, and loves only so long as it is the gainer thereby; we must love even as Christ loved, who sought neither pleasure nor gain from us but gave himself for us ... as a sacrifice and offering to reconcile God unto ourselves, so that he should be our God and we his children.

– Martin Luther –

1 Kings 19:1–8

Have you ever been so down and depressed by the consequences of following God’s will that you, like Elijah, wanted to lay down and die? Ministry can be challenging for clergy and laity alike. Sometimes it seems that no matter what we do as we seek to follow God, that someone, somewhere, will be upset with us.

Elijah had a brief lapse of faith when he heard the threats of Queen Jezebel who was angry with him for the fate of the prophets of Baal, whom she was so fond of. He was ready to give it all up and die, rather than stay and fight any longer with those who did not respect the Lord. Elijah fled from King Ahab and his idolatrous wife and ended up in the wilderness where he laid down under a broom tree and prayed to God to die.

Of course, God was not going to honor that request. God was faithful to his servant and sent an angel to tend to Elijah. The angel fed the prophet twice and encouraged him to get up and move on. The first time Elijah ate he simply laid back down again. But the second time he ate he had enough strength to head to Mt. Horeb which was a long journey.

- *Have you ever lost your faith? Why? How did it come back to you? Where was God in the midst of your suffering?*
- *In what ways did God care for Elijah in his exhaustion and fear? How is God’s strength “enough” for the journey?*

Psalms 34:1–8

In this acrostic poem the psalmist sings, “Magnify the Lord with me,” encouraging others to praise God along with him. What a delightful image that creates for us who love the Lord. Imagine being in a group of believers and simply stopping all the activity and saying, “Let’s take a moment now to give God our thanks and praise.” It certainly would change the tone of a meeting or gathering if things were getting off track or contentious.

- *How does God meet us in our worship and prayer? How do you know he is there with you?*
- *In what ways does God change us when we enter into prayer?*

When the psalmist sought the Lord, he was given an answer and that answer was the assurance of protection and rescue from trouble. The message is clear: God is present with those who fear and love him. He offers all we need for the day and is worthy of our praise.

- *Where in holy scripture do we hear stories of God’s care and*

providence for his people? Is that something we rely on or is it something we often take for granted?

Ephesians 4:17–5:2

In Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Laertes’ father, Polonius, gives him some strong advice before he leaves for Paris. Among that advice was, “neither a borrower nor a lender be.” Polonius also says something that connects to what Paul was trying to teach Christians in Ephesus, “For the apparel oft proclaims the man.” This has worked its way into modern English as the idiom, “The clothing makes the man.” Polonius wanted his son to be true to himself, not to be a phony or try to impress others. Paul doesn’t want the Ephesians to be phony either; he wants them to have a deeper understanding of who they are based on whose they are: sons and daughters of Christ.

The NRSV renders 4:24 as, “clothe yourselves with the new self” rather than the simple “put on” of the ESV. The Greek verb is *en-duo* which literally means, “to dress oneself in clothes.” To clothe oneself with the new self is to put aside old ways: ways that give in to greed, immaturity, deceit, and alienation from God. “But that is not the way you learned Christ!” Paul exclaimed. Christ has taught his followers to speak the truth, resist the devil, work hard, share with others, refrain from gossip or harsh talk, be kind, gentle and forgiving – just as Christ has first forgiven you.

- *In what ways do we concern ourselves more with what clothes we wear than with the nature of our character? Do we worry more about our outward appearance than our inward heart?*

John 6:35–51

Jesus called himself the “Bread of life.” Why bread? Why not some other type of food? The answer to that may seem obvious to some, yet obscure to others, but if we look back through salvation history we see how God used bread to revive and nourish his people repeatedly. It wasn’t steak or potatoes that the scriptures speak about, but bread: Melchizedek brought bread and wine as a blessing for Abram (Genesis 14:18), God commanded Israel to make unleavened bread at Passover and gave them manna in the wilderness (Exodus), and Elijah was given bread by the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17).

- *In what way(s) is bread the symbol for “all our needs? How is Jesus’ very presence with us “our daily bread?”*
- *How is Jesus the fulfillment of God’s generosity and providence to his people?*