

Pentecost 5 (Proper 8)

June 28, 2026



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.

God did not give you your gifts for you to tickle yourself with them, but for you to help your neighbor with them when he needs it, and thus by your strength to bear his witness by your piety and honor to cover up his sin and to conceal his shame, as God through Christ has done for you and still does every day.

— Martin Luther —

Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (LW 21)

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Jeremiah draws a distinction between those prophets who speak only the word people want to hear and those who speak the truth. It is all too easy to proclaim that God is bringing peace and prosperity to the world. People will clamor to hear such a word. To speak a word of judgment, to declare that the world is not as it ought to be, invites criticism and rejection. For Jeremiah, the testing of a prophet's word was to be found in whether that prophecy comes to pass. A prophet who proclaims peace when God is bringing judgment into the world will quickly be found out as one whose word does not come from the Lord.

- *What are some examples in our time of preachers who proclaim a word that is popular but untrue?*

Psalm 119: 153-160

In the face of persecution, the psalmist verbalizes his devotion to the Lord. He makes his case with God that he is faithful to Him and obeys His statutes, even as he asks God to plead his case before his enemies.

- *In what ways is the psalmist appealing to God based on his own faithfulness? How is God's saving work grounded on God's faithfulness and not our own?*

Romans 7:1-13

Many Christians struggle with a proper understanding of our relationship to the law. Scripture says that in Christ the law is "fulfilled" (Greek: πληροω = *plero'oh*, see Mt. 5:17) and also that, in Christ, the law has its "end" (Greek: τέλος = *telos*, see Rom. 10:4). Debates rage over whether Christians, in faith, are aided by the Spirit in keeping the law, or whether the Spirit's work in us has nothing at all to do with law, but is something different entirely. Romans offers some assistance in sorting out these questions. Paul speaks of Christians having died to the law, drawing a comparison with wives being free to re-marry without committing adultery when their husbands have died. Christians have been set free, by death, from our tie to the law. We are now, instead, bound to Christ.

- *What are some of the implications of how we speak about the law? What difference does it make if it is fulfilled or ended, if we are free from it or remain under its authority?*
- *How does the Lutheran understanding of Christians being "simultaneously saint and sinner" figure into this?*

Paul goes on in this section with a surprising explanation of how the law works in conjunction with sin, or how sin makes use of the law. Sin takes the opportunities provided by the law to increase our guilt. The prohibition against coveting, as an example, drove Paul to new depths of covetousness. The law did not create the sin, but was put to destructive use by sin. This destructive work of sin, bringing death through the law, drives us to our need for a Savior.

- *What are some other examples of sin using the prohibitions of the law to increase our rebellion?*

Matthew 10:34-42

The new kingdom that Jesus is bringing into the world is a kingdom of absolutes. There can be no partial obedience. This new kingdom is an all-or-nothing proposition. Jesus hasn't come to smooth over the rough places of our world. He has come to do battle with the darkness that holds our world hostage. He has come for a fight. This fight has real implications in the lives of believers. It is not a cosmic battle being waged elsewhere. It is a battle being waged in the hearts of God's chosen ones. Parents are set against children. Our foes are in our own households. Anyone who would stand in the way of absolute obedience is the enemy.

- *In what ways can those closest to us build up our faith? In what ways can they tear it down?*

The call to take up our crosses to follow Jesus has captured the imaginations of Christians for centuries. It has come to be understood as the defining characteristic of discipleship. The hidden danger in this is that if we go in search of crosses, they can replace the cross of Christ. We can, all too easily, attribute any suffering we might experience to bearing a cross, and our bearing of this cross becomes a testament to our own faith, rather than a testament to Christ. We are called to bear witness to Christ and his cross, his faithfulness, and not our own. Bearing this witness is bearing the true cross and it will bring us into conflict with the powers of sin and death that are at work in the world.

- *Where are some places you see people suffering for their faith?*
- *How do you discern whether suffering is for the sake of the Gospel, for some other purpose, or for no purpose at all?*

In baptism, we are drowned and raised to newness of life. This is God's work upon us, while we are yet sinners. The language in v. 39 of finding and losing one's life becomes a prefiguring of the promises of baptism.

- *What is the danger in looking inward for signs of faithfulness?*