



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 9:1-4

The prophet speaks of a promised son who will come into the darkness and obscurity of this world. But this royal heir will not be just another descendant of David, rather he will be the true Son of God. The names given for Christ in this prophetic passage are descriptive of his nature, and are names previously ascribed to God alone: *Pele Yo'etz* = Wonderful Counselor, *El Gibbor* = Mighty God; *Avi'ad* = Eternal Father, and *Sar Shalom* = Prince of Peace.

- *How do each of these names for Christ help you to understand something about his mission on earth?*

The prophet's familiar words about people living in darkness and gloom are heard both before and after the birth of Jesus.

- *How is darkness (hosek in Hebrew) more than just the absence of light? How is a sign of those who do not know or outright reject the Lord?*

Psalm 27:1-9

Psalm 27 is a beautiful hymn that points to the Lord's protective nature. It is comforting and assuring in dark times to know that we have One who is our sure defense. The psalmist recognizes that God has not promised freedom from adversity. He fully expects to experience armies encamped against him. He expects to encounter fierce opposition. But even in the midst of it, when he is standing face to face with an army bent on his destruction, he will be confident in God's presence and protection. The Lord is his salvation. In Hebrew, this word is *yesha*, the root of Jesus' name in Hebrew: *Yeshua* (Joshua), meaning: "he saves."

- *In the midst of storms we seek safety in shelter. In what sense does the Lord offer protection in times of trouble?*
- *What does "seeking the Lord" mean to you? How do you seek him?*

The psalmist refers to the Lord as "my place of safety and my defense."

- *What is the difference between knowing the promises of God as information and believing these promises are for you?*
- *When have you felt safe in God's company? When has he been a defender for you?*

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

From the context, we can surmise that Chloe was likely an ambassador for Paul who sent and received his letters and, perhaps, read them in the assembly of the congregation.

We should never regard this call from God, which takes place through the preaching of the Word, as some kind of deception. Instead, we should know that God reveals his will through it, namely, that he wills to work through his Word in those whom he has called.
- Formula of Concord-

Here, Paul is responding to the word he received from Chloe's people that the Corinthian church was plagued with divisions and quarreling.

Paul urges the congregation to stop their divisive behavior, warning that arguments will splinter the group, and make them a poor witness to those around them. Paul reminds the Corinthians that no one, not Apollos, Cephas, or Paul himself, had any rightful claim upon the Corinthians except Christ alone. He is the only one who gave his life for them. The center of their faith, what binds them together, is their confession of Christ and him crucified.

- *What does Paul say the message of the cross is to those who believe? What about to those who do not believe?*
- *How can our focus on the cross of Christ keep us from wandering elsewhere, like getting caught up in petty quarrels?*

Paul makes an important point about the message of the cross. Its power does not come from the eloquence or persuasiveness of the preacher. The Word itself, the strange word that Christ died for the ungodly, is salvation for those whom God has chosen. What sounds like nonsense to the world is pure joy and peace to the believer.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 4:12-25

Matthew reiterates the Isaiah passage, showing that Jesus' ministry is the fulfillment of prophecy. The kingdom of heaven is close at hand, Jesus proclaims. It is time to repent as the here and now comes face-to-face with God's kingdom. The light has dawned and the new age has come. The appropriate response to this news is to repent of the sin that clings so closely to us. But as we will see as the Gospel unfolds, the call to repent is not enough to bring about repentance.

On the other hand, as soon as Jesus announces the arrival of the kingdom he calls his disciples from among ordinary men. Jesus speaks ... and they come! They fall in behind him, leaving everything, including home, family, and work. The call of Christ is a miracle in itself; his very word makes things happen!

- *Have you ever had to leave something or someone behind to follow Jesus? If so, how easy or difficult was that for you?*
- *What kind of people did Jesus call to come and follow him? What does that say about who Jesus calls today?*
- *In what sense is this story an example of the power of God's Word to fulfill itself?*