

## Easter 4

May 11, 2025



### 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.*

*Faith is full of life and power. It is not an idle thought. It does not float on the surface of the heart, as a goose does on water; but it is as water that has been warmed by fire. Although such water remains water, it is no longer cold but warm, and therefore, an entirely different sort of water. So faith, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, makes the mind and the thinking of a person different and thereby makes an entirely new (person).*

—Martin Luther—

Exposition on Genesis 12:4

### Acts 20:17–35

Most of the time we go on a journey we know where we are headed and what it will be like there. We do our research, and we learn about the culture and customs of our destination. This was not the case with St. Paul's missionary journeys. It wasn't that he went to particularly dangerous places, only that his proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was what put him in danger. In his remarks to the elders of the Ephesian church he urges them to be bold in their proclamation of the good news to both Jews and Gentiles. "Do not shrink away from potential persecutions," he advises. Paul even mentioned that as he was making his way to Jerusalem, he had no idea how it would go there. He could not be sure he wouldn't be persecuted, thrown in jail, or worse. But he boldly confessed that, even so, the Holy Spirit has always been with him in all his journeys; testifying to him, helping him to discern the wills of others, and giving him what he needs to do his job.

- *Have you ever been frightened at the prospect of proclaiming the good news to any certain people or in any certain place? If so, why?*
- *In what ways was Paul like a shepherd to the flocks he preached to? Where do you suppose he learned how to do what he did as an apostle and pastor?*

### Psalms 23

Martin Luther taught in his Small Catechism, "God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition (Give us this day our daily bread.) that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

The words of this most familiar psalm often call to mind the providence of God. God gives us all we need, in fact more than we could ever ask for. The psalmist names some of those things, which for us sound rather nomadic in nature, but we understand what they mean even in the 21st century: green pastures, still water, restoration of the soul, righteousness that we cannot earn on our own, peace in the face of evil and death, his constant presence and protection, blessings too numerous to count — including being chosen and anointed, a place in his house for eternity.

- *Which of these gifts that God gives us, as our Good Shepherd, impact you the most? Which gifts did you know you needed? Which did you not realize you needed?*

### Revelation 7:9–17

When a loved one dies, one of the first questions they tend to ask is a question of geography. "Where is my loved one?" they prod. "Are they in heaven?" But, that question isn't as easy to answer as a simple "yes," or "no." As we confess in the Creeds each week in worship, "he (Christ) shall come again to judge the living and the dead." Our time is not God's time, and vice versa, so a question about salvation is more apropos than a question of location. We might instead ask, "Is my loved one with Christ?" To that we can confidently answer, "yes" if we know that person to have been a believer.

- *Why are we so immediately concerned about our loved ones' whereabouts at the moment of their death? What are we afraid of? What are we hopeful for?*

The vision of the throne room that John received is one where angels, and saints of all nations have gathered around the throne of God and are serving him night and day. These are the redeemed of the Lord; those who were persecuted, have suffered from great distress, and have been made holy by the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb is their shepherd and each one of the redeemed persons will enjoy being in the presence of God, protected from enemies, hunger, thirst, extreme heat and whatever else they suffered while alive. The Shepherd God is the God who is, who was, and who is to come. He transcends time and space and so does his glorious kingdom.

- *What do we have to look forward to thanks to the blood of the Lamb redeeming us from sin, death, and the devil? How is that a current reality as well as a future hope?*

### John 10:22–30

There are always skeptics who, no matter how much evidence or testimony you give them about Christ, will not believe. In this gospel lesson, Jesus' own people questioned him about his true identity. We can almost hear them saying, "Say it out loud, Jesus! Who are you? Say it for all to hear, right here in public!" Jesus responded saying that he had already told them plainly who he was and they did not believe; him telling them again was not going to change their minds or hearts.

- *What does Luther say causes us to come to faith in Christ? How is that evidenced in this lesson?*