

Sola Lectionary Text Study

Pentecost 14 (Proper 16)

August 25, 2024



This life is full of endless offenses; this is seen primarily in domestic relations. Therefore those who are married should be prepared to condone and forget their mutual offenses, no matter how great they may be, and should resume their customary loving behavior in their association with each other.

- Martin Luther -

WA 43

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.

Isaiah 29:11-19

How often do we get things turned around in our relationship with God? Sometimes we forget who is in charge, that God is the creator of all that is, including us, and not someone that we boss around, insist on our own way with, and only speak to when we are in dire need. Our assumptions about God get twisted as we think that God is here to serve us - the creatures- rather than what is really the case, that we are here to serve God. It seems rather arrogant, doesn't it?

The Word of the Lord came to Isaiah who said, "Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, the thing made should say of its maker, 'He did not make me;' or the things formed say of him who formed it 'He has no understanding?'"

- *Why would human beings ever wonder if God truly cared for them? Have there been times in your life when things weren't going smoothly for you that you wondered if God actually understood you or cared about you?*

The reason that God is upset with Israel is because of their religious complacency. The Lord said they drew near to him with their mouths, honored him with their lips, but "their hearts were far from me."

- *How do our lives change when we become complacent about our relationship with God? What sorts of things do we let get in the way of our devotion to God? How does Sabbath rest bring us back into communion with God?*

Psalms 14

The psalmist laments by speaking the thoughts of God, "There is no one who does good." We live in a world where many are quick to say, "There is no God!" It bothers us to hear such denials. We often wonder why people are blind to God's wondrous mercy and love in the world.

- *In what way is God present in every good deed that is done by humanity? Can something "good" be done apart from God?*

Ephesians 5:22-33

"Are you ready to get married?" a pastor asked a young couple who presented themselves for premarital counseling. They nodded in assent. Addressing the soon-to-be-groom he questioned, "Are you ready to die for this woman?"

Some who have wed and had a not-so-positive experience might think the pastor was likening marriage to death, but that's simply not the case. Ephesians 5:22-33 was what was on the Pastor's mind as he prepared to counsel the couple

for their upcoming nuptials. This passage has disappeared from favor in post-modern wedding ceremonies. It has, unfortunately, gotten a bad wrap over the years. At first glance it seems to put the onus of obedience on wives, "wives, submit to your own husbands." But upon closer inspection, the greater responsibility is with husbands who are charged with loving their wives as "Christ loved the Church." Recall that Christ loved God's people unto death on a cross.

Obedience seems to be a bad word in our 21st Century culture. So for wives to "submit" and be obedient to their husbands, who are the head, the foundation, the cornerstone of the household, seems oppressive rather than secure. The key here is that the Church submits (*hup-oh-tass-oh*) to Christ, so wives do the same to the one who is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the family.

- *What might our culture look like if we actually encouraged men to be responsible for their families rather than degrading them and making them feel less than important?*
- *What would happen if we robbed Christ of his rightful place in the church?*

Paul pulled the entire argument together when he said that husbands should love their wives like Christ loved the church - he gave his life so that she might live, be made holy and without blemish. If a man loves his wife, he will love her as he does his own body, his own being. This love is a sacrificial love first shown to us by our Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

- *Why have we often truncated this reading in wedding ceremonies or in worship? What are we afraid of?*

Mark 7:1-13

The issue at hand in the gospel lesson for today is ritual defilement. What makes a person unclean? The Pharisees and scribes indicated that it was a matter of not observing the cleansing rituals that were proscribed by the elders. Jesus, on the other hand, responded to their criticism with a criticism of his own: You fail to follow the commandments of God and instead make up your own traditions. Rather than the proper washing of hands, Jesus proscribed clean hearts; rather than rituals performed to make things "clean," Jesus encouraged love and service in God's name.

- *What might be the modern day equivalent of "unclean?" How do we get tripped up by our expectations and judgments of other's religious practices? Does that unite us or separate us?*