

## Pentecost 19 (Proper 21)

September 29, 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.

Moses was a mediator for the Jewish people alone; it was to them that he gave the law. Therefore one must shut the yaps of the factious spirits who say, "Thus says Moses," etc. Here you simply reply: "Moses does not pertain to us." If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses.

– Martin Luther –

"How Christians Should Regard Moses"

### Numbers 11:4–6, 10–16, 24–29

This lesson comes from the days after the Exodus, when the people of Israel had been wandering in the desert for many months. How quickly they had forgotten what it was like to be slaves to Pharaoh; all they could talk about was the wonderful "salad bar" they used to have.

- Do you think their bland diet was the true cause of their complaining? Might it have been a smokescreen for a deeper sense of anxiety?

Moses felt the weight of responsibility in the face of the moaning and complaining of the Israelites. He alone had to deal with the continued complaints and resistance of the people. The leader of Israel cried out to God for help.

- Have you ever been so overwhelmed with the day to day tasks of life that you wanted to give up all responsibility? Why does stress make us feel alone? What makes us forget that, with God, we are never alone?

God answered Moses' cries with a show of his power. He called for seventy elders to come and receive the Spirit, that they too, might be able to speak with authority. They spoke for a short time, helping Moses serve the people. Meanwhile, two men, Eldad and Medad, who were part of the seventy elders but were not at the tabernacle, began to prophesy in the camp proper. Joshua urged Moses to make them stop.

- Why was Joshua concerned about Eldad and Medad's prophesying? Do we sometimes become too concerned about the way others speak in the name of the Lord?
- How does this story remind us that it is up to the Spirit of God who will speak for him? In what way has Christ authorized you to speak on his behalf?

### Psalms 104:27–35

The text for today is just a small piece of a much larger psalm in praise of God for the wonders of creation. Here the psalm expresses how God's creation is dependent upon him for life itself. The fact that God faithfully provides his creative and life-giving Spirit is cause for praise.

- How does this psalm reflect what Job says in Job 1: "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21b)? How can we give God praise even in those times when God appears to be working against us?
- It is not just we who rejoice, but God himself who rejoices in his creation (v. 32). What does it mean that our very own life and faith are examples of God's active work in the world?

### James 5:(1–12) 13–20

James speaks in these verses of the power of prayer — both individual (by oneself) and corporate (as part of a group). In fact, he encourages believers to reach out to one another for spiritual support in their time of need.

- We can pray for ourselves at any time and in any place. Why then might Christians find it helpful to ask others to pray for them? Does having more people pray for something make the prayer more effective, or is there something deeper going on?
- Why do you think James mentioned the biblical example of Elijah? How can the example of others serve to encourage us in our life of prayer?

Notice that in verse 15, physical healing is mentioned in the same sentence as forgiveness of sin. (Compare the story of Jesus healing the paralytic in Mark 4:1–12.)

- Are there times when there is a direct relationship between sin and sickness? Is that always the case? Explain.
- Has there ever been a time when illness or injury has made you more conscious of your sinfulness and need of forgiveness? In what sense is forgiveness itself a type of healing?

### Mark 9:38–50

Like Joshua in our first lesson, the disciples were concerned about a man who cast out demons in Jesus' name. They said "we tried to stop him, because he wasn't following us."

- What do you think was underneath the disciples' concern? Was it that the man was not following Jesus, or more specifically that the man was not following the disciples?

Jesus corrected the disciples, teaching an important truth: If a person does something good and miraculous in Christ's name, it will have a genuine effect in the life of that person — whether we can see it or not. In this way, those who are "not against us" are for us, because they are for Christ.

- Sometimes we struggle with the very same thing the disciples did in this passage. What do Jesus' words say to you about how you treat those who acknowledge Christ but express their faith in ways that are different from you?

The final portion of this text has to do with leading others astray, and the warning to avoid temptations. It ends with the encouragement to be "salty" Christians.

- How would you summarize the theme of this whole section (v. 42–50)? What is the relationship between inward faith and outward action?
- How can cliques form in groups of Christians? Is that a true example of unity in Christ?