



Children are the most delightful pledges of a loving marriage.
They are the best wool on the sheep.

- Martin Luther -

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.

Genesis 2:18-25

God directed Adam to name all the creatures, but then realized that there was no creature yet that was on equal ground with the first man. Adam had none among the created order that could fully relate to him, his intellect, and emotions. So out of the ground God made a “helper” for Adam. In Hebrew this word *etzer* carries the connotation of “one who is there for us in time of need.”

- Compare how the word “etzer” (help/helper) is used in Exodus 18:4, Psalm 33:20 and 46:1. What does it mean that man and woman need to serve as “helpers” for one another?
- Some have inferred from the term “helper” that God created women as somehow “lesser” than men. Does the fact that the Bible calls God our helper make him lesser than us?

Notice in verse 23 that the distinction between male and female (in Hebrew “ish” and “ishah”) occurs within the acknowledgment of their oneness as human beings.

- As part of God’s good creation, why does Scripture emphasize the relationship and oneness of the two genders rather than the differences between them?
- How does this foundational lesson also foreshadow our human need for a Helper (Savior) in Christ, who is one with us?

Psalms 128

For those who fear the Lord and live according to his statutes, blessings will be granted to them. This is not a message of magical prosperity in return for faithfulness to God. Rather, it is a natural consequence of life lived in obedience to God’s will. Following the Lord and devoting our lives to his praise results in a life filled with strong, abiding relationships with our children, spouse, neighbors, and friends.

- How are loving relationships a result of our obedience and love for God? In what ways is this simply a “way of life” for those who believe?
- The Hebrew word for blessing is “berakah.” How is God’s blessing in our lives much more than just personal happiness?

Hebrews 2:1-13 (14-18)

The author of Hebrews calls us to “pay much closer attention to what we have heard” (v.2:3). This is a reference to the Word of God as a whole, and to the overarching theme of salvation found throughout the sacred writings of Scripture.

- Why is it so easy to drift away from our study of Scripture? What happens to our spirit when we do?

In this lesson, two points are emphasized: 1) that God has given a special status to human beings in his divine plan, and 2) that God has chosen to become one of us in Christ. Notice the word “help” appears here again (v. 16) in reference to Christ delivering us from the power of sin, death, and the devil.

- In what way does Jesus’ incarnation demonstrate the particular love that God has for us as human beings?
- In order to save us, why was it necessary for Jesus to be fully human and fully divine?

Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees cornered Jesus and tried to trap him in a question about divorce. Just as it is in our age, one of the quickest ways to get crowds upset about the “judgmental” teachings of Scripture is to bring up the subject of personal, intimate relationships. Someone is always bound to be offended.

- Why are matters relating to sexual relationships always a flash-point for which people take offense? Why are such subjects so sensitive?
- The word used for the exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus is *peirazo* (to test). How have those who are anti-Jesus tried to test you in your life? Did the Holy Spirit give you the words to respond?

Jesus wasn’t fooled by the Pharisee’s tactics. He pointed to their hardness of heart (*sklero-kardia* in Greek) as the true issue at stake. It isn’t the law that is faulty, rather humankind’s unwillingness to be obedient to God’s will.

- In what way did God establish the institution of marriage to protect people from sin? According to Jesus, what was God’s intention for marriage from the beginning?

In contrast to the “adult” faith of the disciples, Jesus showed his love for children, and used them as an example of what real faith (“the kingdom of God”) looks like. He spoke of receiving the kingdom “like a child” (v. 15) as something true of all people of genuine faith.

- How would you describe the fundamental difference between the rights and capabilities of adults versus that of children? What does that say about the nature of genuine faith?
- Mark 10:14 is a verse that has often been inscribed on Lutheran baptismal fonts throughout the centuries. How is our Lutheran practice of General Baptism (the baptism of people at any age) in harmony with Jesus’ description of faith in this passage?