



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.

The church is a tender plant. It must be watched. People hear a couple of sermons, scan a few pages of Holy Writ, and think they know it all. They are bold because they have never gone through any trials of faith. Void of the Holy Spirit, they teach what they please as long as it sounds good to the common people who are ever ready to join something new.

—Martin Luther—
Commentary on Galatians

Jeremiah 26:8-15

Jeremiah was willing to risk his life for the sake of following the command of the Lord to prophesy to Israel. God had given him bad news to share, and the people did not want to hear it. They wanted to kill Jeremiah for telling the truth, even when he told them God was willing to relent of the disaster he had pronounced (see v. 13).

- *Why is it always a risk to speak the truth of God's commands to people who fail to live in obedience to Him?*
- *Why don't we, as sinners, want to hear about our sin — even knowing that God is prepared to forgive?*

The theme of “not listening” is a common one in the Scriptures. It angers God when his people fail to listen for his voice, rather they attend to their own will which ultimately ends up causing pain and suffering. This failure to listen to God is part of our sinful human nature. Every generation laments this same problem just as each younger generation fails to listen, and has to find out the hard way.

- *Israel failed to listen to the prophets, just as those in Jesus' day failed to listen to him. Who in your life have you failed to listen to and wish you had heard?*
- *Why does maturity have to come “the hard way” sometimes?*

Psalms 4

In this psalm, David confidently calls on the Lord to answer his cries, because he knows that God alone is his righteousness. In frustration he asked those around him, “Why do you continue to focus on empty words and delusional opinions?” Only the Lord God is wise and good.

- *In what ways do people in our world today still seek after things that are false and ineffective?*

David tells the people to call on the Lord. Anything less is hopeless. The covenant relationship God made with his people promises his children will never be put to shame.

- *In verse 8, how does Scripture use sleep as a metaphor for trust and peace? How does this same promise apply to the “sleep” of death that we all will someday face?*

Philippians 3:17-4:1

For believers, one of the most disturbing and heart wrenching aspects of the faith is our inability to bring others to faith. Even though we know that faith is something which comes only by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is troubling to see

people — especially those we love — reject the promise of Christ.

- *In what sense is evangelism never just an objective task, like something we can check off a “to do” list? Why is witnessing to our faith always a personal matter?*

Even for Paul, the lack of faith in some of those around him was a deep and abiding concern. We can sense the depth of his angst as he speaks to the Philippians here, saying, “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven...” (Philippians 3:17-21).

- *Is Paul speaking here simply of unrepentant unbelievers? In what sense can those who call themselves Christians also live as “enemies of the cross of Christ”?*
- *In what sense did Paul himself exemplify what it means for a Christian to take up their cross and follow Jesus?*

Luke 13:31-35

As is the story of Jeremiah, we see here that Jerusalem was still in the business of killing those who came bearing the truth because it had already determined for itself what was right and what was wrong. And yet this time, there was something greater at stake, for the One whom they sought to kill was not simply the bearer of truth, but was himself the Truth made manifest.

- *Why do you think Herod wanted to kill Jesus? Why would Herod care about some wandering preacher?*

In spite of rejection, Jesus continued faithfully on the path set before him — a path which would ultimately lead him to the cross. Jesus did not turn away at the first sign of our resistance, but persisted to the end.

- *Why is it important to see that Jesus proceeded toward Jerusalem, even though he knew what would happen there?*

In our Sunday morning worship, we regularly say (or sing) the words: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” This verse appears in the traditional liturgy in the *Sanctus*, just prior to the distribution of Holy Communion.

- *Do you think that Jesus had us in mind when he said what he did in verse 35? In what sense do we, as believers, “see” in faith something that the rest of the world does not see?*