

## Epiphany 2

January 19, 2025 (Year C)



*Seeking Christ is seeking help, grace, life, comfort, salvation, blessedness, redemption from death, sin, devil, and hell; seeking Christ is wanting to have Him as a Savior, nay, it is seeking everything that Christ is and everything for which He came into the world.*

– Martin Luther –

Speech at Augsburg, 1530

### 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 62:1-5

God brought creation itself into being by the power of his Word (Genesis 1). Here, in this passage, God says he refuses to remain silent until his salvation has brought about a new reality for Zion. God is still at work in the world by the power of his Word which brings repentance and forgiveness to his people. Nothing we do can merit the righteousness God grants to us as his people.

- In verse 1, God says “I will not be silent until...” In what way does God’s Word actually create the righteousness and salvation of which he speaks?
- Why is it essential for us to know that, in the face of sin, death, and the devil, God will have the last Word?

In verses 4-5, God promised that he would give a new name and a new identity to Israel who was once called, “Forsaken,” and “Desolate.” Israel’s new name will be, “My Delight,” as well as “Married,” which says so much about God’s favor for his people. God rejoices like a bridegroom rejoices over His bride.

- In a culture where it is said that more than 50% of marriages end in bitter separation and divorce, how might this passage bring new hope to a broken people?
- Does anyone actually “live happily ever after” as the fairy-tales say? How does this image of God as bridegroom and people as bride speak to the real struggles and pain of the world and how God faces all of that with us?

#### Psalms 128

One of the most pervasive modern heresies in the Church today is known as the “prosperity gospel.” It is the message that says if we believe hard enough, God will reward us with worldly riches and success. This view regards faith as a sort of “down-payment” on a financial investment, and God as a Santa Claus figure, rewarding us with worldly wealth.

- Why is the “prosperity gospel” such a dangerous heresy? How does it obscure the real work of Christ in our lives?

Here in Psalm 128, Scripture does speak of the “prosperity” and “blessing” that comes from God — but not in a greedy and self-centered manner, as if faith were a means of financial gain and personal success.

- In what sense do the blessings and prosperity described here apply to more than just the individual?
- How are the blessings we receive in faith God’s gifts of grace and not “reward” or “payment” for our works? Compare what

Paul says about this in Romans 4:1-6.

#### 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Paul makes it clear that when we confess our faith in Christ, it is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in us. Faith is not a human work, but God’s own gift by the power of the Spirit.

- Look up in the Small Catechism Martin Luther’s explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. How does Luther say the same thing about the work of the Holy Spirit? What things does the Spirit do in us?

Spiritual gifts are a certain sign that Christ is with the community of faith. These gifts do not exist apart from God, but are given to edify and build up the body of Christ.

- Go through the list of spiritual gifts in verses 8-11. How do each of these gifts serve to help our brothers and sisters in faith?

#### John 2:1-11

In his Church Postil of 1525, Luther said this about marriage in a sermon on John 2 (the wedding at Cana):

“Marriage has the foundation and consolation that it is instituted by God and that God loves it, and that Christ himself so honors and comforts it, everybody ought to prize and esteem it, and the heart ought to be glad, that it is surely the state God loves and cheerfully endure every burden in it...”

By this time Luther had been married to Katarina von Bora for almost two years, and he used the story of Jesus at the wedding in Cana as an opportunity to expound on the virtues and trials of matrimony.

- What does Jesus’ miracle have to do with how God regards the estate of marriage? In what sense is this story a metaphor for the reality of married life, and God’s presence with us?

In the story from John’s Gospel, Jesus’ mother found out that the wine had run out at the wedding they were attending. She knew it would cause great embarrassment for the families hosting the event. When she pressed upon her son to do something, Jesus responded by saying, “My hour has not yet come.” Even so, he performed a miracle that granted honor to the family and demonstrated God’s abundant mercy.

- How does Jesus’ response show his deep care for people?
- Have you ever struggled with what to pray for and what not to pray for? What was that struggle like for you?