



Wealth is the most insignificant thing on earth,
the smallest gift that God can give a man.
What is it in comparison with
the Word of God?

– Martin Luther –

Comment made at the family table

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.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–20

Have you ever asked yourself concerning all the “things” you have, “When is enough, enough?” Most of us have way too many things that we have collected, hoarded, and saved. Often, these things are rarely looked at again, but sit in our closets, forgotten and unused. If we don’t get these things out and enjoy them, why do we keep them? What is our reason for clinging to material goods that don’t satisfy and are of no real use?

- Which of the Ten Commandments speak directly to our love of “things”? How do these commandments relate back to the first commandment against idolatry?

Money never satisfies the deepest yearnings of our spirit. Rather, when we become preoccupied with money it takes more and more of our attention in order to protect it. Scripture asks, “What gain is there to him who toils for the wind?” (v. 16) We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing.

- In what ways do greed and miserliness make a person void of joy? Conversely, how does gratitude for what God has given, especially the little things in life, grant us a deep joy?
- Why is it important to remember that God is the one who has entrusted us with all we have, and that God wants us to serve others with what we have been given?

Psalms 119:9–16

Psalms 119 is the longest hymn in the psalter; it focuses on the law of the Lord. In this portion the psalmist asked the question, “How can a young man (or woman) keep his way pure?” The answer is simple: “By guarding it according to your word.” The Hebrew term “word” is *dabar*.

- Do you think it is any coincidence that *dabar* (word) is also the verb “to speak”? What did God speak into existence?
- How is the guiding “Word” of the scriptures incarnated in Jesus — the Word who became flesh? Is there any other word we can trust so fully?

The Word of the Lord is still relevant and critical to our walk with him, and yet we live in a Christian culture that is increasingly more biblically illiterate. We like to blame the culture for the ills of society, but as the Body of Christ in the world, we require very little of members within our congregations. The question the psalmist posed is a very important one for us to meditate upon. We might even expand it to say, “How can a follower of Jesus keep walking in the way of the Lord?” By guarding that way according to His holy and precious Word.

- What might you do as a congregation to inspire a deeper relationship to the Word (Jesus) by spending more time together in the Word (Holy Scripture)?

Hebrews 4:1–13 (14–16)

The author of Hebrews used the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites as an example of those who were disobedient to the Word and will of God. God threatened them repeatedly that they would not “enter into his rest” (v.3) if they failed to turn from their idolatry and grumbling.

In these verses, the author reminded his Christian audience that the promise of “rest” that was once extended in the wilderness is a promise that still stands for God’s people. Those who believe are ones who have entered that rest. Such rest is not just physical sleep or an absence of activity; it is broader than that. Faith is a peace and rest for our souls, and an end to spiritual “wandering.”

- Agnostics who have questions about faith are often referred to as “seekers.” In what sense are we all seekers? How does faith in Christ allow us to experience true rest for our hearts?

Mark 10:23–31

Jesus taught his disciples about wealth and its relationship to the Kingdom of God using some great hyperbole. He said that it is as likely for a wealthy person to enter the kingdom as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. In other words, it’s impossible. This disturbed the disciples deeply, even though none of them were particularly rich. They responded, “Well then, who can be saved, Jesus?”

- How does Jesus show that self-salvation is not possible — for the rich, or for anyone else?

Peter reminded Jesus that they had left everything behind to follow him. Jesus declared that no one who left family, work, or home in order to follow him would be abandoned. In fact, he said that those who sacrificed will receive in abundance, both here and now and in eternity.

- In what sense was Jesus not “congratulating” the disciples, but showing that God was already working within them?

Jesus’ call is not an easy one to follow. Walking with Jesus brings about a reordering of all of life — not to mention struggles and persecution. Even so, trusting in Christ is the single path to the Kingdom of God.

- In what ways has your own life been reordered as you follow Jesus and put him first in your life? How have you experienced God’s blessing in the difficult vocation of faith?