



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.

What is the house of God? Is it not the whole creation?
It is indeed true that God is everywhere, but he is especially present in the Holy Scriptures, in his Word, more than anywhere else. We learn therefore here that nobody can presume to derive any comfort from anything but the Word of God.
You will find the Son only in the temple.

—Martin Luther—

Sermon, First Sunday after Epiphany (1523)

1 Kings 3:4-15

The Lord God came to Solomon in a dream one night. He said to the young king, “Ask what I shall give to you” — in other words, “ask me for whatever it is that you want.”

- What might have been possible requests that a young king would have been tempted to ask of the Lord?

It seems as if Solomon had some wisdom and discernment in him to begin with, in light of the request he made to the Lord for understanding and good judgment.

- Do you think that some people are just born to be wise? Or is it a gift that comes only through age and experience?
- Is there a difference between intelligence and wisdom? What about intuition and wisdom?

God was pleased with Solomon’s request. Instead of asking for riches, power over his enemies, or a long life, he asked to be given the gifts that would make him a good and fair king for Israel. There are three Hebrew words used in this passage that all point to the same thing: **discernment of God’s holy will**. Those words are (phonetically) *shaw-mah* (to hear intelligently), *bene* (to realize or discern), and *ha-kam* (to be wise, shrewd, learned in the law). Solomon was concerned that he would be a fair judge between good and evil; this concern came from his love of the Lord as the author of 1 Kings points out at the beginning of this passage.

- In what ways does our love for the Lord spur us to ask for things that will benefit others rather than ourselves?
- Why is such wisdom particularly important for a leader?

Psalms 119:97-104

Psalms 119 is an acrostic (alphabetical) poem that is concerned with the keeping of the Torah. As a whole, it reflects on the value of the human life lived within the instructions of God given in the Law. God’s word of instruction was given to be a blessing and a gift. This is reflected in the exclamation of the psalmist, “Oh, how I love your law!” (v. 97).

- Have you ever done like the psalmist and meditated on God’s Word and commandments throughout the day? What comfort or hope does it give you?

The psalmist asserts that the commandments of the Lord make him wiser than his enemies.

- How does following the law make us “wise?” What would happen if we neglected the law and focused only on “gospel?” Why do we need both?

Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul uses some descriptive words to describe the believers in Ephesus: chosen, beloved, holy, blameless, predestined, adopted, sons and daughters. He says that all of this work on God’s part in our lives is according to his will and desire.

The Greek word he used here is *θελημα* (*thelema*), referring to God’s intention and purpose. Because it pleased God to choose believers, he gave the church all of the spiritual blessings needed for his purposes. No one person has them all individually, but collectively we possess all the gifts needed to do God’s will.

- How does it make you feel when you think that God intentionally chose you to be his son or daughter? Who do you know that needs to hear this good news?
- What gifts has God given to you that make it possible to accomplish God’s will?
- Are we the ones who actually accomplish things or is it God working through us? Could it be that we might not even be aware of what God is up to among us?

Luke 2:40-52

It was time for the Passover festival and Jesus and his family went to Jerusalem to the temple. The 12 year old boy remained behind, but his parents didn’t realize it until days later. When they returned to look for him they found him in the temple talking with the religious leaders. The leaders were amazed at Jesus’ wisdom and understanding, even as his parents were shocked by his level of comfort among them. Luke tells us that when his parents found him they made it clear that it was time to return home.

- Have you ever lost a child for a period of time (even a few minutes)? How did it make you feel?

The Greek word used here for Jesus’ response to his parents’ direction is *υποτασσομαι* (*hupotassomai*) which is translated that he was “submissive” to them. As a son, Jesus submitted his will to his parents in keeping the fourth commandment. Imagine, the Lord of the Universe submitting to the authority of his earthly parents!

- Why do you think we, as human beings, often have a negative view of authority?
- This same word is used in Ephesians 5:22 where Paul speaks about wives “submitting” themselves to their husbands as they do to the Lord. How is the submission of faith a positive trait and not the description of a weak or timid character?