



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.

Because so much depends on God's Word that no holy day is sanctified without it, we must realize that God wants this commandment ("remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy") to be kept strictly and will punish all who despise his Word and refuse to hear and learn it, especially at the times appointed.

– Martin Luther –

The Ten Commandments, The Large Catechism (Kolb, Wengert)

Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 6–9

When you were a child, did you ever sit with your grandparents and look through scrap books and old photos and listen to their stories of the “good old days”? Perhaps they were immigrants, or the children of immigrants who had interesting accounts of making their way to a new land.

In this passage, through a sermon given by Moses, God calls Israel to obedience as the promised land is coming into sight. The people were cautioned not to add or subtract anything from God's law, but to remember all that they had seen and been through in the past forty years of wandering. Moses instructed the people to tell their children these stories so they would know and remember their history.

- *Why is it so important for us to remember where we've been and what we have learned from those experiences? Are we more apt to repeat old mistakes when we fail to recall how God has been with us through the highs and lows?*
- *What do you think it means when God says through Moses, “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it”? Why is this important — in either direction?*

Psalms 119:129–136

In this section of what is a very long acrostic psalm, the psalmist sings of God's transformative power over him that comes through the holy Word. God's Word sheds light on people and situations where there was only darkness and misunderstanding. God's Word brings wisdom and understanding to even the simplest of minds. The psalmist longs for the Lord's words and keeps his direction, even while it pains him to see others who do not value the same holy Word of God.

- *Do you share the psalmist's love for God's Word? In what ways do you find yourself hungry for more and more understanding of the Bible?*
- *How does engaging in study and dwelling in God's word through prayer actual help us understand God's will for our lives? What is wrong with quicker, more “magical” ways of attempting to divine our destiny?*

The psalmist declares, “Your promise is well tried” — indicating that God's Word is something that can be trusted; it has been proven repeatedly that God is true to his promises.

- *In what ways do you know for certain that God's promises are trustworthy and true? Do you ever doubt that fact? If so, what makes you doubt? What helps your faith in this regard?*

Ephesians 6:10–20

Martin Luther was known for using battle imagery in his writing, especially his best known hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Luther knew that the Christian life was not an easy one; himself suffered the brutal attacks of the devil.

In Paul's final words in his letter to the Ephesians, he too speaks of battle and the armament that has been given to believers by God. These tools are both defensive in nature and offensive — a warrior doesn't simply wait for an enemy to attack but prepares to go on the offensive.

Paul wanted the believers to know that Christ had already won the fight at Calvary, but that would not prohibit the principalities and powers of darkness from attacking believers. They must be ready! The gospel is what makes believers ready; constant prayer and supplication, being in the Word, walking in love, all these are weapons against the rulers of this world.

- *Does the imagery of warfare as a metaphor for faith bother you? Why or why not? How does the image of the armor of God help you in your daily walk through life?*
- *How have you seen the enemy attack as you've been drawn closer to the heart of Christ?*

Mark 7:14–23

The word used in this passage for “defile” is κοινος (*koinos*) in the Greek. It means literally “to make something common.” To the Pharisees who challenged Jesus about his disciples' failure to wash their hands, the issue at stake was that they were impure. The actual ritual involved wiping one hand that was balled into a fist so that water neither dripped onto the forearm or back onto the hand after it was washed. This action was not written in the Law but rather was a tradition passed on from generation to generation by the scribes so that people's hands would be ritually clean.

Jesus was upset by their criticism because they were more focused on human traditions than they were the commandments of God. He challenged them on their thinking by saying that what comes from the outside does not defile, but it is what comes from the inside (the heart) that poisons and makes unholy.

- *Can you think of any human traditions in the church that get in the way of true devotion to God?*
- *How have you seen Jesus' assessment about the heart of a person being the source of purity or defilement to be true?*