

Nativity of Our Lord

December 25, 2024



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.

If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it ... it was not made or created like a creature. It must therefore be eternal and without beginning. For when all things began it was already there, and cannot be confined in time nor in creation, but is above time and creation; yea, time and creation are made and have their beginning through it.

—Martin Luther—

Church Postil, Sermon on John 1

Isaiah 52:7-10

Remember the Verizon cellular phone commercials, “Can you hear me now? Can you me *now*?” No doubt when it comes to being heard we can all relate to the feeling of speaking and getting no response from those we are addressing.

- *When, in your day to day existence, do you feel like you aren’t being heard? How does that make you feel?*

Five hundred years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah spoke to God’s people in exile. God promised that a righteous remnant would return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. Their return would be characterized by joyful singing and the reception of happy news for all who longed to return home. At that time the people would know firsthand the comfort and care of the Lord.

As Christians, we also read this text through the lens of Jesus’ birth. It is the ultimate in good news, as the angel proclaimed to the shepherds in the fields saying, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)

- *What do you think keeps many people from truly understanding the message of Christ as “good news” in their lives?*
- *How does the fulfillment of God’s promise in the past give us faith in his promise for our future?*

Psalms 2

This royal psalm urges all the kings of foreign nations to bow down and worship God’s anointed king, the Messiah. The plots of the rebellious peoples surrounding Israel were about to be put to shame by God’s power working through his chosen people. God will get the last laugh (v.4).

- *In what way(s) does God accomplish his purpose even within the rebellious culture of today?*
- *In what sense are “submitting to the Lord in fear” (v. 11) and “taking refuge in him” (v.13) two sides of the same coin?*

Hebrews 1:1-6 (7-12)

The art of lithography has come a very long way since it was first invented in 1798. Just like with Gutenberg’s movable type printing press, the technology of lithography meant more copies of an art piece could be produced in much less time. In lithography, when something is described as a “limited edition” it means that a single printing plate was used for only a limited number of impressions. When the

print-run of the “edition” is complete, the printing plate is destroyed; no more prints can be made. This is what gives value to the “limited edition.” (See: www.kinderart.com/printmaking/print101.shtml, for more background)

The author of Hebrews posits that in the past, God revealed his will and ways to our ancestors in many ways, all of which were impartial and incomplete. Now in these final days, God has revealed himself fully and completely to us in his Son, Jesus. He cites that Jesus is the “exact imprint” of the Father and through him we are the receivers of the ultimate revelation from God.

The Greek word used here for “exact imprint” is *χαρακτηρ* (*character*). Jesus Christ is identical in nature and being to the Father. He is not a reproduction, or simply one of many “prints” of an edition. He is the limited, one and only, human being in whom we encounter God.

- *How might this text help to clarify the relationship between God the Father and God the Son? Why is this mystery so hard to wrap our brains around and yet we know it to be true?*
- *How are we, as followers of Christ, more akin to the prints in an edition of a unique original painting? In what way do we share the same “character” of Jesus? In what way do we not?*

John 1:1-14 (15-18)

The message of Jesus came to human beings through the prophets of old. Now, Jesus, who is the incarnate Word (Greek: *logos*) has come “in the flesh” to give light and life to all that God created. This Scripture is fundamental to what we mean by the miracle of the Incarnation, as well as to our understanding of God as the Holy Trinity.

This text makes it clear that Christ was not created — he is not a finite creature with a limited span of life as we are. Christ is the eternal and living God, come to dwell and “pitch his tent” (Greek: *εσκηνωσεν*) with human beings (v. 14). He came to live alongside the created ones, sharing our existence and reality — even the difficult and desperate moments of human life.

- *How can the one who was pointed to in the words of prophecy be the very Word himself? What is that saying?*
- *Why was it so important for God to take on flesh and blood in the person of Jesus? What does that do for us?*
- *How do our words and our actions convey the same good news of Christ as we know it? In what sense does God come “in flesh” to others through us?*