



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.

When you are deep in trouble, He so turns you away from it and gives you such courage that you think you are sitting in a garden of roses. So you find life in the midst of death, and in the midst of discord you find peace and joy.

(Christ alone does it) He says to you: step right into death and die; for the Holy Spirit will come to you and make you so courageous and joyful that you do not feel death...

—Martin Luther—

Sermon on Pentecost, 1522

Acts 5:12–20 (21–32)

It's every evangelist's dream to have crowds of listeners come to faith; to see people transformed by the Word of the Lord is like nothing else. When the Spirit moves within us to share the Good News of Christ, there is no threat that can stop us — not imprisonment, persecution, or death. That's the power of the Holy Spirit to make certain that this Good News is never stifled or silenced. Peter states the call very clearly saying, "We must obey God rather than men."

- When have you been so filled with the Spirit that obeying God, even in difficult or dangerous situations, felt completely secure and effortless?
- As you read this passage from Acts can you sense the power of the Spirit within the flurry of activity that was the early Church's mission? When have you sensed that same excitement in your own ministry context?

Psalms 148

Have you ever gone away from home to take in some beautiful sights in the world? Were you in awe of what you saw and experienced? No doubt, we've all been places that were so beautiful it took our breath away — mountains, rivers, the ocean, trees in full bloom, magnificent architecture, and radiant sunrises. Yet, the psalmist proclaimed so long ago that nothing rivals the beauty and majesty of the Creator. Nothing that he created comes close to the Lord's splendor.

This psalm is a wonderful example of personification of the created order. It is not just the living things, like birds, insects, and sea creatures that praise the Lord; mountains, valleys, moon and stars also sing his glorious praises!

- Can you imagine that if there were no more human voices to be heard, that the very creation would sing God's praises? How does that make you feel when you think about it?

Revelation 1:4–18

Have you ever had a young child ask you, "Who made God?" It is very common existential question that young believers want to know about as they learn that God created them, their parents, and the whole creation. It is also a bit difficult to answer sufficiently for a child whose thinking is very concrete at a young age. Sometimes, if we are honest with ourselves, it is difficult for us adults to grasp as well.

- How have you tried to answer that question, "Who made God" for a young person? Were they satisfied with your answer?

This passage is packed with titles that describe the Lord Jesus. These descriptions help us understand that which is nearly impossible to understand — the nature of Christ and what he has done for humanity. He begins by saying that he is the "one who was, who is, and who is to come." God is our past, present, and future! He is the beginning and the end of all that is or ever will be. This One who "is" proclaims even more about his identity: faithful witness (martyr), firstborn of the dead, ruler of kings, one who loves us, who freed us by his blood on the cross, made us into a kingdom, made us into priests, the keeper of the keys to Death and Hades.

- What do these descriptions of Christ help you to understand about who he is and what he has done for humankind?
- When speaking to a child about the existence of God, what is most important to share?

John 20:19–31

In the busy-ness of this hectic world, sometimes all we truly want is a few moments of peace. In the context of Jesus' death, the disciples had locked themselves away in fear of the religious leaders who had insisted on their master's crucifixion. There was no peace among them in that locked room; only anxiety, grief, and uncertainty. When Jesus appeared in their midst, John tells us that they were "glad." That seems an insufficient word to describe the relief they must have felt. The Greek word here for glad is *χαίρω* (*chairo*) which is a much stronger emotion akin to "rejoiced" or "delighted." As Jesus conversed with them, his presence and breath upon them brought them true peace in the Hebrew sense of the word, shalom.

- How is shalom a deep peace that comes from God alone, and creates a sense of well being even in the midst of all sorts of trials and uncertainties?
- When have you experienced true delight? Were there circumstances that caused it, or did it simply happen out of seemingly nowhere?

Physiologically, we know that deep breathing can calm us down as an increased flow of oxygen reaches the brain and gives us a chance simply to take an emotional step back. It is healthy to focus on our breathing throughout the day, and even gives us more energy when we start to lag.

- In what ways did Jesus' breath bring a calming effect upon the disciples? In what ways did it energize them?