

Easter 5

May 18, 2025



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.

Can one fall from this joy? Yes. And as soon as we fall, eternal pain is at hand, out of which, although it is in its nature eternal, yet God rescues his own. Thus the joy continues forever, but as long as the person is upon the earth he may fall from it. You should understand it thus: Christ is my Savior, if! so believe and confess. This joy is to me an eternal joy so far as I remain in it. But when Christ departs out of the heart, then the joy also departs. The grace continues, but the conscience can easily fall.

—Martin Luther—

Acts 11:1–18

It's hard to change our ways and adopt new practices, especially religious ones that we have been taught all our lives. For Peter to receive a supernatural vision that changed his understanding of what is clean and unclean, had to be a major transition. It's no wonder his fellow Jews were upset! They had no idea what God had revealed to Peter, and how all people were being unified by the blood of Christ. They had a hard time understanding how the Law had been fulfilled in Jesus and how that broke down long-standing barriers. Peter's question to those who were criticizing his actions amongst the Gentiles, sums up his position quite well, "Who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

- *When have you felt the way Peter did when it came to following God's will in the midst of radical change? When did you feel like the Jewish people?*

Psalms 148

Have you ever tried writing in a journal all the things you were grateful for? Once you got past the usual things, like food, water, shelter, family, and work, were you able to go deeper in your thanksgiving? If you keep writing long enough you will think of things that seem so minute, but are actually truly profound things to be thankful for. Consider these: DNA – that wondrous genetic material that is so tiny it cannot be seen with the naked eye, and yet it is the blue print of living creatures; the vastness of the solar system with all of its different types of stars and planets; the infinity of numbers; the capacity of the human brain. All of these and so much more point to the wonders of God. We are humbled by the creative majesty of the one true God and Father of us all.

- *What joy do you receive from knowing what God has created and how he treasures the whole creation?*

This psalm is one of the *halal* psalms (refrain has the word hallelujah sung repeatedly) used by Israel to praise the majesty of the Lord. The poet draws on the things he can see and give thanks for and sings praises to the Lord for his creative majesty. The more we know about the created order, the more there is to sing praises to God about.

- *What sorts of things capture your imagination when it comes to the creation? How do those things make you feel about God?*
- *Are you able to sing God's praises about the things that you don't understand? How is it an act of faith to praise God for*

what we don't know, even as we praise him for what we do — or think we do, know?

Revelation 21:1–7

What is more beautiful in any culture on earth than that of a blushing bride? Our post-modern culture has devoted big bucks to promoting bridal couture and wedding finery. There are multiple television programs devoted to the "reality" aspects of getting married.

- *Why do you think that we, as a culture, are we so fascinated with weddings?*

As the vision given to John unfolds, he sees the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven like a bride in all her splendor. God's eternal city will be decked out like a bride who has prepared herself for the most important day of her life. In this new holy city, God will forever dwell with humanity in holiness and righteousness.

- *What does this passage tell us about God's love for his bride, the church?*

John 16:12–22

Sometimes we don't know what we need to know until the exact time we are meant to know. (You know?) Things often have to unfold before us so that we can discern the will of God in our situation. That means that a lot of the time, God keeps us in a "need to know" basis. He will give us the knowledge and opportunities we need when the time is perfect.

- *Have you ever received or spoken to another person, a bit of knowledge that you knew for certain was not something you learned or knew consciously? How did that make you feel? Who was behind that insight?*

Jesus informed his followers that when the Holy Spirit comes he will speak to them about the things that are to come. They were not ready to absorb all that they needed to know at that time. They weren't ready for Jesus to leave them yet, so how could they wrap their minds around what was going to happen to their lives in the next few weeks, months, and years without him?

- *What do you do when you find yourself in a situation in which you cannot understand what is going on? Do you despair? Do you become downtrodden and depressed? Or something else?*
- *When you look back on a situation where at the time you didn't understand something important, but figured out the reasons later, how did it bolster your faith?*