

Easter 6

May 25, 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.

Hence, Christ wishes to say here: You have now heard both what kind of joy the world will have, and what kind of sorrow will be yours. Therefore, learn it and cleave to it when you meet and experience it, so that you may have patience and lay hold of true comfort in the midst of such suffering.

—Martin Luther—

Sermon on John 16

Acts 16:9–15

Faith is a mystery. No matter how well we preach or teach, no matter how eloquent or clever we are with words and phrases, our words alone cannot bring another person into faith. It is always God's doing, and God is the one who opens human hearts to belief. There simply is no other way.

- *When have you encountered believers who insist that their faith is something they did for themselves? How do you gently explain to the ways of the Holy Spirit when it comes to faith?*

Luke recalled a story about Paul's missionary journey that landed him in Macedonia, in the city of Philippi more specifically. Women gathered around him to hear what he was talking about, but one in particular was lifted up by Luke as a new convert. It was the Lord who opened Lydia's heart to hear what Paul was saying about Jesus Christ. It was the Lord's doing that she felt compelled to be baptized into the faith.

Luther was very certain about this call to faith, drawing on Paul's words in Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ," Luther taught, "I cannot by my own understanding for strength, come to Jesus Christ my Lord..." It is up to the Holy Spirit to work faith within us. But, people need to hear the word for the Spirit to his work, and if we fail to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, how will they ever hear?

- *Have you ever wondered about specific people you know, how some come to faith and others do not?*
- *How do Paul's and Luther's words encourage you to continue sharing the story of Jesus Christ with others?*

Psalms 67

In this psalm, the singer prayed that God's ways would be known in all the earth. We continue to pray for that daily as we see the misery and trials of a world without the Lord to cling to. Blessings come from knowing the Lord and trusting in his grace and providence. Comfort comes from knowing, in an intimate and personal way, the One who set the stars in space and who protected our ancestors from their enemies. Without the Lord God, where would we find hope?

- *What is the qualitative difference between knowing God as a concept or idea, and knowing God in a relational way?*

Revelation 21:9–14, 21–27

Just before the scope of this lesson begins, we hear the message that was given to John, that now God's home would be with his people. "God himself will be with them." (Rev. 21:3) The vision continued with an image of the Bride of the Lamb. Not a traditional bride, this one is a city — the holy city of the New Jerusalem. A wondrous picture is given of an ornately decorated city where there was no temple. God and the Lamb were the temple.

- *Why would such detail about the New Jerusalem be given to John in this vision?*
- *How do you understand this passage to be about a transition from a physical church to a spiritual church?*
- *Compare the sacrament of Holy Communion where we receive the body and blood, the very presence of Christ, with this New Jerusalem. How will Christ be present to us in the holy city?*

John 16:23–33

Jesus prepared his followers for his departure from this human life, instructing them to ask for whatever they need in his name. Their words suggested they understood what Jesus was saying, but their imminent actions betrayed their ignorance. When Jesus spoke them in what they considered concrete, plain language, they said they understood and believed. But Jesus knew better. He knew that soon they would be scattered away from him in fear and horror. Only Jesus knew the sorrow that they would soon experience. He also knew that that sorrow wouldn't last forever.

- *Why do we often pretend we know what is happening or what something means, when we truly do not? How does that get us into trouble?*
- *How do we exhibit our trust in the Lord by asking him for whatever it is that we need? Does that seem contrary to trust? Why do we often hesitate to ask for what we need?*

Jesus knew that his friends would abandon him, but he proclaimed that even so, he would not be alone. His father would always be with him because he loved him.

- *How do these words indicate to you that Jesus understood the pressure his followers would soon be under? Did he expect them to be able to do better?*

This passage ends with a word of grace from Jesus to his friends, "But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

- *How do these words comfort you in times of trial and suffering? Do you think the disciples even heard these words?*