

Pentecost 9

August 10, 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.

(Jesus) means to say: Beware, and test your own heart, and know assuredly that your heart will be where your treasure is... what is dear to a man, that is his God. His heart is occupied about it day and night; he sleeps and wakes with it, whether it be money and property, pleasure or honor, etc. Observe your own heart and you will soon find what is sticking in it, and where your treasure is.

– Martin Luther

Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount

Genesis 15:1–6

In the preceding chapter a war raged between the kings and men of the region near Mamre where Abram had pitched his tent. Word got out to Abram, that many of his people had been taken captive by the enemy and so Abram joined the fight. He was very successful in his endeavors and was able to bring many of his people home safely and the kings were highly impressed with him. After the victory over the invading kings, God came to Abram with a message of hope and security. He promised the man a great reward. Abram's response was a pointed question, "What will you give me, Lord? I don't have what I really want — an heir of my own flesh and blood." In that moment God promised his servant that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. The author of Genesis tells us that Abram believed what God said.

- How is righteousness simply believing what God says?
- Do we tend to make "righteousness" something way more complicated than it truly is?

Psalms 33:12–22

God's love for his people is the source of our hope and trust in him. The one who made all humanity observes our every movement and knows our every need. In crisis and calamity, we turn to human rulers and armies to save us, but ultimately there is only One who can rescue us from the powers of evil and death. Our hope is solidly in the Lord who cares for and protects his people who fear him.

- In what ways do we expect God to save us in this human life?
- When disaster strikes, why do people either give up on God when their needs are not completely met, or on the other end of the spectrum, see all of the little miracles around them?
- What does it mean to you to trust God's holy name?

Hebrews 11:1–16

There's a common saying that "seeing is believing," and yet those who follow Christ know that faith is not something that is created through what we see. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit and try as we might to explain it, there simply are no rational or reasonable words that can convince another person in matters that are received by faith.

- Why is it our natural human tendency to want to explain everything with theorems and data and cold, hard evidence?

- Why do things that Christians accept on faith, cause those who do not believe to call us "foolish," "ridiculous," or even "misguided?" Does that ever bother you?

The author of Hebrews made a very long list of those who came before us in the faith and how their actions were a sign of their faith in God. Through each action, the person was commended as righteous. None of the people mentioned, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, knew what the outcome of their actions would bring. They simply trusted in God to be in control of things, and by trusting they were considered faithful.

- Does trusting in God to be in control mean that we cannot hope for the things we want? (See Hebrews 11:1)

The ESV translated the Greek word μαρτυρεω (*mart-eu-ray-oh* = martyr or witness) as "commendation" or "commended." Merriam Webster defines "commend" as the act of doing something worth praise or approval. A more literal definition of *martyreo* is "witness." It's where we get our English word martyr.

- Compare the two English translations of the word *martyreo* – commended versus witness. Does one word seem like a better definition than the other?
- Considering that our good works cannot save us, is there a danger of thinking of faith as a good work?

Luke 12:22–34 (35–40)

We know that there are many starving people on our planet. There are those who have such a food shortage that from one day to the next they are not sure what they will feed their children. For those who live in a constant state of hunger, we have to wonder how they would react to Jesus' words, "For life is more than food, and body more than clothing." (Luke 12:23)

- What is Christ's promise to those who do not have enough to subsist for the day?

For others who do have enough food, clothing, and shelter so as not to have to worry about it, there are still other worries that plague our minds. So much so that it can be hard to give thanks for the resources we do have.

- In our abundance, how do we often lose sight of the very real worries of the poor and homeless?
- What does it mean for poor and well-off alike to "seek his kingdom?"
- Where is your greatest treasure?