

Pentecost 16 (Proper 21)

September 28, 2025



We must not view the rich man according to his outward conduct; for he is in sheep's clothing, his life glitters and shines beautifully, while he tactfully conceals the wolf.

– Martin Luther–
Church Postil

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.

Amos 6:1–7

Amos continued to warn God's people, this time including both Israel and Judah in his prophecy. The leaders of the people of God had adopted a life of ease. They felt secure in their wealth and political power. They led idle lives of drunkenness, unconcerned about any fall that might be looming on the horizon. They thought of themselves as of first importance and the first of all of the nations. Rather than being in a choice position, the Lord's word to them was that they would be the first to go into exile.

- *In what ways does financial security make it easier to turn blind eye to problems in the world?*
- *In what ways does financial insecurity make the darkness in the world even darker?*
- *Why is it so tempting for those of affluence and security to think they are better than any other kingdom on earth?*

Amos warned the people not to put disaster out of their minds (v. 3). We never know when trials may come and no one is immune to them. Having a false sense of security can be disastrous. He further warned them that their neighbors had bigger and better armies, but they were defeated. How could Israel and Judah think they were above such defeat?

In Romans 12:3 Paul said, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."

- *In what ways did Israel and Judah think too highly of themselves? Have you ever been guilty of that?*

Psalm 146

"Do not put your trust in princes." The temptation is ever before us to put our trust and hope in those who have no real power to save even if they have political or social power. Many rulers and potential rulers do not hesitate to make promises about all the reasons people should trust them, but the psalmist reminds us that there is only one worthy of our trust. There is only one with power to save. Trusting in the Lord, alone, for our salvation is the mark of faith.

- *What are reasonable expectations we can have of our leaders? What are unreasonable expectations?*

The psalmist went on to describe what the Lord does for his people – gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry, sets the prisoners free, lifts up those who are trampled upon, watches over strangers, widows and

orphans. This is not the exact list of accomplishments we look for in our leaders. In fact, some of them are quite the opposite of what we look for or want. But this is what God is up to. *What would we think of a president or governor who set prisoners free? Would that be a selling point for their administration?*

- *Luther spoke about humanity being incurvatu in se (curved in upon ourselves) meaning our main focus is ourself. If we find ourselves among the oppressed, down trodden, or imprisoned, does that change how we think about God acting in these ways? If we are not a part of one of these groups does that affect how we hear this psalm?*

1 Timothy 3:1–13

In 1 Timothy we find the church's expectations of those who would be leaders in our midst. The offices of bishop and deacon are to be held by people who are mature in faith, and whose lives are in good order. They are to be people who can serve as an example to the faithful.

- *How do these expectations of bishops and deacons align with our own expectations of clergy? Do we still value the attributes listed here? Do we have similar expectations of all people in the church?*

Luke 16:19–31

The story of the rich man and Lazarus gives us a picture of the disparity between the rich and poor in this life and the next. While the rich man is covered in fine linen, Lazarus is covered in sores. The rich man feasts every day, and Lazarus hopes for some table scraps.

There is no indication that the rich man had any awareness of Lazarus at all. Only when he finds himself in Hades does he take note of this man who had lived next to him for so long. But even in death the rich man still considers himself superior to Lazarus, expecting Lazarus to be sent from the bosom of Abraham in order to serve him. However, a great chasm prevents Lazarus from this mission.

- *What do you think this parable is telling us about the relationship between this life and the next?*
- *Does the poverty of Lazarus make him more worthy of salvation than the rich man?*

When the rich man understands that Lazarus will not be sent to him, his concern shifts to his brothers. Perhaps they could be warned of what is coming. But Abraham replies that they have had plenty of warnings and one more, even from someone who rises from the dead, won't do any good.

- *How does our salvation depend on the witness of one risen from the dead?*