

Pentecost 8 (Proper 11)

July 19, 2026



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.

“St. Paul shows the holy cross in all creation, in that heaven and earth and all the creatures in it suffer with us and bear the dear, treasured cross. Therefore, we must not weep and moan so piteously when we fall on evil days. We must instead wait patiently for the redemption of the body and for the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

— Martin Luther —
Sermons from 1535, WA 41

Isaiah 44:6-8

In some ways, monotheism has a pretty firm grip on our world. Even among those who claim some sort of pluralistic world view, there is an assumption that all belief systems are paths to the same god. On the other hand, our world is awash in gods of all sorts. There is an endless list of idols we worship in place of the Living God.

Our reading from Isaiah is a declaration that there is only one true God, and it is the one revealed to Israel. To worship another is to worship falsely. This Living God has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. He is not “one path among many” headed in the same general direction. He is the Living God incarnate. All the rest are impostors.

- Why do some of the most dangerous godlike impostors we encounter often come in the form of good things?
- Why is there such a strong tendency in our world to insist that all gods point to the same God? What is at stake here?
- Can you list any idols that have tempted you in this way? How are they a threat to faith in the Living God?

Psalms 119:57-64

The psalmist remains obedient to the Lord even in the face of the wicked. He follows the guidance of God and keeps his commandments even though he is suffering. He prays that the Lord would come quickly to him even as he does his best to follow God’s ways.

- When have you had a time in your life where you pled to God to hurry and act in your favor, even though you have been faithful in waiting for him to move?
- Is it wrong for us to remind God that we are trying to do what he has asked us to do? Why or why not?

Romans 8:18-27

Waiting, waiting, waiting. From the moment the Gospel first grabs hold of us in a way we can comprehend, it is easy to think of ourselves as simply waiting for the Kingdom to finally come. We see the darkness around us. We see the suffering and futility of all of creation, and we await God’s final intervention. Finding the patience to wait is only possible through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We are not called to try to speed up God’s timeline. We are not called to try to set a chain of events in motion that will finally move God to finish things up. We are called to wait in hope for something we can’t see. Any signs of God’s new

creation are obscure to us at best. But by the Spirit’s power, we wait in trust and hope.

- Have you ever felt impatient for God’s Kingdom to come? What kinds of situations create that impatience?
- What are some actions people take in hopes of gaining control of God’s timeline? How are those actions similar to the original sin in the Garden of Eden?

Sometimes our waiting in darkness becomes too much for us. We bow down to pray, and no words come. The well is dry. Yet we have the promise that the Spirit even gives us the words to pray when we have no words. The one before whom we are nothing but beggars goes so far as to give us the words for that begging. In no way does God leave his chosen ones empty-handed.

- Have you ever experienced a period of spiritual emptiness, when you could find no trace of your faith? What is it like to stand before God, not only empty-handed, but without even a word to say?
- How does the promise of the Spirit’s intercession reinforce our understanding of how God goes about his saving work?

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

We think we know what the kingdom of heaven is like, but in our Gospel reading today, Jesus fired off a number of parables to describe it that go against our assumptions. All these parables share a common point. In this world, the good and the bad are mixed together, and it is in God’s hands. It is God’s responsibility to sort them out in the world to come.

In the church we are tempted, all too often, to want to get started with the sorting process. We want to set some standards, parameters that will keep the field pure and clean, and we seem not to notice if a little of the good gets tossed out with the bad.

This set of parables reminds us that we are not called to step into God’s place to begin the sorting. We are simply called to scatter seeds, to add yeast, to tend to the fields. The harvest is in God’s hands, and by his mercy, we are not being chopped down and thrown into the fire, despite our own weedy tendencies. We are being nourished, again and again, by his Word.

- What are some ways the church or society tries to weed out bad elements? What sort of standard do we have for sorting the good from the bad?
- Have you ever been considered a bad influence? What if your life had been snuffed out at the first sign of sin?