

Pentecost 13 (Proper 16)

August 23, 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.

The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith. In the same way, he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and preserves it in unity with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

– Martin Luther –

Small Catechism: On the Third Article of the Creed

Isaiah 51:1-6

The Lord speaks to his people encouraging them who seek him and his righteousness to look back to the roots of their faith and nation. He speaks of their ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, as the stone quarry from which they were dug.

- *If you look back on the generations of the faithful disciples who came before you, how does that bolster your faith?*
- *Compare Isaiah's words here to what Scripture says in 1 Peter 2:5 about the Church being built of "living stones." How are we, as believers in Christ, part of this same family of faith?*

God calls his people to pay attention to him; to listen for his voice and to follow his ways. Struggles and hardship are temporary, but God's goodness, peace, and righteousness will be forever.

- *Why is it so hard to remember the goodness of the Lord when we are in trouble or in pain? How does God remind us to pay attention to what he has already done and will do again in our lives?*

Psalms 138

The psalmist gives thanks to the Lord who answered his prayers and in his time of need, strengthened him for the days ahead while guiding him through the paths of trouble he was facing. For this he sings the Lord's praises and proclaims that all people, from kings of Israel and other nations, to the lowly in society, will be seen and heard by God.

- *In what down-to-earth ways, and through what means, can we count on being able to see and hear God?*
- *Once we hear God's voice and know his protection, what does that compel us to do for the sake of his name?*

In verse 1, the psalmist says "before the gods I sing your praise." Scripture acknowledges that there are other forces that seek to draw our attention and worship. Often the most tempting idols are good things in our lives!

- *How can we enjoy and make use of the good things God provides, without turning God's good gifts into idols? How does expressing our thankfulness to God help to keep our faith directed to the right place?*

Romans 11:33 – 12:8

In his letter to the Romans, Paul transitions from a section where he has raised many difficult questions with a "doxology" of sorts that praises the name of the Lord and glorifies his wondrous deeds and inscrutable ways. The

Lord's ways are so far above and beyond us that we often don't even know the right questions to ask. We must rely solely on the Word of the Lord to help us to know the little bit that we do know.

- *When was the last time you simply sat and pondered the goodness of the Lord? (Do it now. What comes to mind?)*
- *In what sense do our unanswered questions actually reinforce the need for faith and trust in God?*

In the Small Catechism, Luther said in thankfulness that "God has given us our bodies and souls and all that is ours ..." Here in verse 12, Paul encourages the Christians in Rome to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God." In our modern hyper-sexualized culture, the human body is often used and displayed for many reasons that have nothing to do with faith.

- *How can we affirm the goodness of creation in the human body, without turning them into instruments of sin? How does faith actually help us to resist temptation, and why is this a good thing?*

The Lord is continually at work transforming us into his faithful people, and with this gift of transformation comes greater discernment of the ways and will of God.

- *Why is it sometimes a temptation to look at the progression of our lives and claim that our own hard work and diligence is what has made us who we are today? How is that a denial of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit?*

Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus asks the question of his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Their answers vary from John the Baptist to Elijah or another prophet. Then Jesus puts them on the spot. "Who do YOU say that I am?"

- *In what ways does Jesus put all of us on the spot by asking, "Who do you say that I am?" Why is this an essential question for each person to answer on their own?*

Simon gets the answer right when he says, "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God." Jesus goes on to say that this faith was not something Peter came up with on his own; Peter's faith was the result and evidence of having been blessed by God. Playing on Peter's name, which means "rock," Jesus said the rock of faith would build his church.

- *If, in fact, we are justified by faith in Christ, in what way is the whole church of Christ built on the rock of faith?*
- *How is our confession of faith the same as Peter's? In what sense is faith both personal and communal?*