

Day of Pentecost

May 24, 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.

(Christ) has proved his love in taking your sins upon himself and paying for them with his blood, as he tells you by the gospel. He has given you grace to believe by his Spirit, and has prepared and accomplished everything most surely, so that you need not care or fear any more, but only keep your heart strong and reliant on his Word and faith.

– Martin Luther –
Letter to His Father (February 15, 1520)

Numbers 11:24–30

Sometimes our desire for good order in the church causes us to butt heads with the Holy Spirit. While Moses gathered up the elders of Israel to receive the gift of prophesy through the Holy Spirit, two men stayed behind in the camp. Eldad and Medad didn't join the gathering of elders, yet the Spirit came to rest upon them, too. They prophesied right where they were, in the midst of the camp.

This was not how things were supposed to go. There was a meeting and a plan — and Joshua didn't think this sort of thing should be allowed. He wanted Moses to stop the two men. But Moses recognized that the Word they were given to speak was a Word the people in the camp needed to hear. Rather than seeking to restrain the gifts of the Spirit, Moses celebrated the gift God had given these two men.

- *What are some ways we seek to restrain the work of the Spirit for the sake of good order? On the other hand, how can lack of concern for good order in the church lead to problems?*
- *For us, as Christians, how do we properly discern when a word of prophesy comes from the Spirit and when it is of a different origin? Compare what is written in 1 John 4:1–6.*

Psalms 25:1–15

In faith, we offer up ourselves — our lives, our hearts, our obedience, as well as our time, talent, and treasures — in hopes that they will be pleasing to God. This is all well and good. But often, because of what we do, the sinner in us cannot resist the urge to put the focus of faith on ourselves.

The psalmist has a different way of thinking about this. He lifts up his soul to God, puts his trust in the Almighty. From this vantage point he recognizes that everything is already in God's hands. We have nothing to offer, only to receive.

"Show me your ways ... teach me your paths ... lead me in truth ... forget my sins." We come before God with open hands, in need of his bountiful gifts. The promise we live in is that God is merciful to his beloved children, providing us with what we need.

- *What difference does it make to think of ourselves primarily as receivers rather than givers in relation to God?*
- *Why is it so difficult to recognize and admit our empty-handedness when it comes to the grace and mercy of God?*

Acts 2:1–21

There is tremendous power in wind. It can erode the land. It

can slam doors and bend crops to the ground. When violent and out of control, wind can destroy everything in its path. This everyday occurrence, one we often don't even take note of, is also one of the most powerful forces in nature.

In Acts, we hear the coming of the Holy Spirit described as sounding like "the rush of a violent wind." It wasn't a little breeze or one gust. As the disciples were gathered together trying to figure out what to do next, the Holy Spirit came upon them like a tornado. The Spirit filled that room and shaped everything it touched.

Words the disciples barely understood themselves were suddenly comprehensible in countless languages. The fear and trembling that had filled them since Jesus had ascended into heaven was replaced with confidence in the message they had been called to share. The story of a lowly carpenter's son who had suffered a violent death became THE story of God's deeds of power. That wind that rushed through that house and impacted their lives changed everything!

The power of the Holy Spirit made it possible for the disciples to do the work they were called to do. It made their message understandable to the crowd that had gathered for Pentecost, and gave them the faith and courage to take on a mission for which they had no particular training. That same Spirit is at work among us still, shaping our reality and inspiring our witness.

- *Are the gifts of the Spirit reserved for magnificent displays like Pentecost? What are some everyday miracles you have failed to notice?*
- *What are some ways you see the Holy Spirit at work in your context (your community and congregation)?*

John 7:37–39

In our text today, Jesus speaks to those who realize their spiritual thirst, who know they are not righteous in themselves. To thirsty souls, his words are a comfort; to those who are "full of themselves," Jesus' words seem presumptuous. But we know that all are thirsty, whether they realize it or not. And so we preach that the Spirit of the Lord is ready to fill the thirst in us. The promise is that the Spirit is being unleashed upon believers. Those who belong to Christ will be filled with the righteousness of his living water and shall no longer thirst as if alone.

- *In what ways does faith quench our thirst? In what ways does faith make us thirsty for more?*
- *Why must we look to Christ for righteousness and not to ourselves?*

The Holy Trinity

May 31, 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.

“Therefore we should not dispute about how it can be that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, for it is by its very nature beyond all reason, but it should be enough for us that God speaks in this way about himself and reveals himself thus in his Word.”

— Martin Luther —
Sermons on John 3. WA 52

Genesis 1:1–2:4a

The sheer length of this passage, along with its familiarity, make it challenging for preaching. Addressing some major themes of the passage may prove a helpful approach.

One thematic focus is the power of God’s Word to accomplish his purposes. Day after day in the creation account, God speaks and things happen. Light, sky, dry land, plants, animals, and finally humankind all come into being through the power of God’s Word. This powerful Word that brings about creation will eventually take on flesh for the salvation of this world that came into being through him (John 1). God’s Word not only creates the world. It also creates saving faith.

- *What does this account of creation show us about the power of God? If you were imagining how the world came to be, is this what you would imagine?*

A second thematic focus has to do with the goodness of God’s created order. God looks upon what he has made and makes an assessment of it. Day after day, as God brings his creation into being, he declares it good. Creation is as God wants it to be; it is aligned with his purposes. Understanding the goodness of creation in this way shapes our understanding of what happens later, when sin enters the picture. The whole of creation becomes misaligned. It is out of step with God’s purposes, disordered.

- *What is the significance of the original creation being good? How does that shape how we think about life in this world?*
- *With the entrance of sin into the world, what remains of creation’s goodness? What is God at work doing for his creation, even now? (Compare Romans 8:18–25.)*

A third thematic focus is the order and intentionality of God’s creative work. Creation is not brought into being in one instantaneous act; instead, creation is an unfolding process. God adds to his creation over time, and when the world he desires is complete, he rests. God is deliberate. This passage reminds us that the world is not the result of chance or the general indifference of a distant deity. From the start, God has had an ongoing vision and purpose for his creation.

- *How does this passage relate to what science teaches us about our world? Are the two at odds? Does it matter?*

Psalms 8

In the face of an amazing creation, the world and all that live in it praise the name of the Lord. God is worthy of praise

from those who have been created. The handiwork of God is beyond anything a human can imagine. The psalmist is grateful to be counted among the glorious creation and stands in awe of God’s decision to place humanity just below the angels.

- *When you think at the same time of God’s majesty and his great love for humanity, how would you describe the sense of awe and wonder that the psalmist felt?*

Acts 2:14a, 22–36

As Peter preaches about the significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus he points the finger at those who are listening saying, “this Jesus whom you crucified and killed” has been raised from the dead by God. The one who denied Jesus three times now leads the disciples to be proclaimers of the Gospel and witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.

- *In what ways are all of us those who have denied Christ and yet are called to be sharers of the Gospel?*

Matthew 28:16–20

The sending out of Jesus’ disciples to baptize and teach has become the blueprint for the continued sending of Christians into the world. But Jesus’ Great Commission is more than just an evangelism slogan — it reveals something important about Jesus himself, and his place in our lives.

As they are gathered up on the mountain, Matthew tells us the eleven worshiped Jesus. This is not surprising, given that he has just been raised from the dead. There is recognition by the disciples that Jesus is one worthy of worship. But even in light of all that has happened, despite all that they have witnessed, Matthew tells us, “Some doubted.” For some of the disciples, the evidence didn’t add up to faith.

- *What do you think caused some of the disciples to doubt? What does their doubt, despite a firsthand encounter with the risen Lord, tell us about the nature of faith?*

Jesus tells his disciples that “all authority in heaven and on earth” has been given to him. He now holds in his hands absolute authority over God’s creation and now calls upon his disciples to go out and share the Good News. His authority is going to be used to bring about salvation for those who are lost. That is a far different use of absolute authority than anyone would have imagined.

- *What does this passage show us about what authority looks like in the hands of one without sin?*

Pentecost 2 (Proper 5)

June 7, 2026



What comes by the works of the law is thus disfavor rather than grace. Therefore faith alone must obtain the grace promised to Abraham, for these examples too were written for our sakes [Rom. 15:4], that we too should believe.

– Martin Luther –

Word and Sacrament I, LW 35:374

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.

Hosea 5:15–6:6

Our reading begins with the final verse in chapter 5. In the previous verses, God has warned the people of Israel and Judah about the consequences that accompany idolatry. The people were placing their trust in false gods like Ba'al or in foreign kings. Sadly, the people may have been searching for God in these false gods, but they were only going to come up empty-handed and disappointed, to say the least. We, too, fall into the same temptation. Certainly we are God's children, called, gathered, sanctified, and enlightened through the Holy Spirit, but we can become too comfortable with the world's teachings and lose sight of God and his teachings. So in verse 15, God says that he will move away from the people of Israel and Judah, and he will wait. He will wait for them to sincerely come seeking God with repentant hearts, acknowledging their sinfulness in placing their trust in idols instead of God.

- *Have you ever felt like God was “far away” from you? What did that feel like?*

God may have “moved away” from the people of Israel and Judah, but he was waiting patiently for them to return to him. God is never really “far away” from us. The words of Absolution and promise of forgiveness always place God close to us.

- *Have you ever sensed God's presence closely with you in the words of Absolution or the promises spoken in the Sacraments? Did that reassure you that God is closer than we often realize or want to admit?*

Hosea's pleas fall on deaf ears. We are at risk for the same to happen to us. God continues to call all his children to repentance.

- *Hosea begs and pleads with Ephraim and Judah to return to the Lord, to repent of their sinfulness. How is their repentance considered “false repentance”?*
- *What does God desire more than any sacrifice? From where should such a sacrifice or offering come?*

Psalms 119:65–72

The psalmist speaks of going through trials and dealing with afflictions. He sees these as a means of restoring him to God's Word and bringing humility about him.

- *When has affliction or life's trials humbled you? How has that restored you to God's Word?*
- *The psalmist states it was “good” that he was afflicted. Was it good that you were afflicted? Why or why not?*

Romans 4:13–25

So often we are tempted to give our own works and merits credit and a role in our salvation. However, that diverts from the truth that salvation is God's work, not ours. It is Jesus Christ, and him alone, who saves us apart from our works. Our good works and deeds are simply done in response to what God has already done for us.

God promised that Abraham would be the father to many nations. Abraham trusted God and did not doubt, even though he was very old and Sarah was barren. Faith might be strong, and it might be weak. But even the smallest amount of faith (smaller than the size of a mustard seed) can justify the sinful believer because of what Jesus Christ has done.

- *When have you been tempted to doubt God's promises? How did God strengthen your faith and assure you of his promises?*

Not only are we heirs of Abraham, we are heirs of faith – the same faith Abraham had.

- *How does this same faith get passed down through our own descendants?*
- *How have you played a role in passing on the faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead?*

Matthew 9:9–13

Local rulers, along with the Romans, bestowed the right to collect taxes. Local tax collectors would then charge a fee on top of the taxes they collected. For this reason, many did not trust tax collectors. Additionally, tax collectors were considered by most to be dishonest and greedy because they abused the above practice.

- *How might most people react to Jesus eating a meal in a formal setting with tax collectors?*
- *What is significant about Jesus calling Matthew to be one of his twelve disciples?*

Pharisees were teachers of the Law. Their interpretation of and strict observance of the Jewish Law set them apart from other Jews.

- *What would have been the Pharisees' intentions of asking the disciples why Jesus chooses to eat with tax collectors and sinners?*
- *What does Jesus mean when he says, “Those who are well have no need of a physician” (v. 12)?*
- *What is the significance of Jesus' command to the Pharisees to “go and learn what this means” (v. 13)?*

Pentecost 3 (Proper 6)

June 14, 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.

What is original sin?

It is a propensity toward evil. It is a nausea toward the good, a loathing of light and wisdom, and a delight in error and darkness, a flight from and an abomination of all good works ...

– Martin Luther –

Lectures on Romans, LW 25:299

Exodus 19:2–8a

While Israel was camped out in the wilderness of Sinai, God summoned Moses up the mountain. The Lord said Moses while he was on the mountaintop that he should go down and remind the people that it was the Lord himself who had carried them out of Egypt, away from their oppressors, and brought them to himself. The image God uses was that of an eagle carrying his young on his wings. If they would follow the Lord in obedience and trust, he would make of them his treasured possession. This is the God who made heaven and earth and he is choosing them, out of all the nations of peoples on the earth.

- *What is the significance of Israel camping at the foot of Sinai? What will God do for them while they are in this place?*
- *God promised to make Israel a holy nation, a royal priesthood, if they would but live in obedience to him. What is their response? From what you know of the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, how long does their proud boasting last?*

The Hebrew word in verse 5 that is translated as “treasured possession” is *segullah* (seg-ool-law). Literally it means “valuable property.” This word is only used eight times in the Old Testament, but it carries a significant meaning for God’s people. To belong to the Lord God, creator of all that exists, is to be a cherished and valuable person.

- *How does knowing that God considers you his “treasured possession” give you confidence in your relationship with God? How does this description keep the relationship in the proper order?*

Psalms 100

The psalmist is joyful in the notion that he, along with all of Israel, are beloved sheep of the Lord’s pasture. This is cause for praise and thanksgiving to the one whose love is from of old and endures forever.

- *Why do you think the psalmist exhorts the people to know that the Lord is God? Shouldn’t that be obvious? Why or why not?*

Again in this psalm, human beings are spoken of as God’s possession: “It is he who made us and we are his.”

- *Is it good news or bad news to know that we do not “own” ourselves? What are the implications of this? (Compare with 1 Corinthians 6:19–20.)*

Verse 2 says, “come into his presence...” Verse 4 says, “enter his gates ... and his courts.”

- *In the Biblical days, what would this have been a reference to? As modern day Christians, when or where do we come into*

God’s presence? How is that the same? How is that different?

Romans 5:6–15

God’s timing is perfect. He is never too early and never too late. Paul proclaims that God’s timing for salvation was the right time as well. That time came “while we were still weak.” For sinners in need of redeeming, the Son came to earth in human form to reconcile us to the Father. Christ’s death shows us the depths of God’s love for us.

- *Is this text saying that we make ourselves good enough to be redeemed? On whose goodness is God’s redemption based?*

Paul makes the argument that one would scarcely die for a righteous person — meaning it *could* happen if the one who laid their life down was brave enough, bold enough and the one who was saved was worthy enough. It would be a rare occurrence indeed for one to die for someone who was deemed no good.

- *What does all this say about who Jesus is?*
- *How does the blood that Jesus shed on the cross make us who are sinners into the righteous? Why would Jesus go to all that trouble?*

Matthew 9:35–10:8 [9–20]

The Gospel writer tells us that as Jesus traveled around visiting cities, towns, and synagogues, he ran into a lot of people who were sick and lost. Scripture says, “He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:6).

- *How are humans like sheep in that we need someone we can trust to follow? Why do we so easily get lost?*

Jesus sent his disciples out into the surrounding areas to heal, cast out demons, and have compassion on people the way that he did. There was a great need for laborers, Jesus said, but there are few who are willing to do the work. The work is hard, and it is risky; it can be dangerous and hostile.

- *Shepherds often use border collies to assist in their work. What do these trained dogs have in common with the shepherd? What do they have in common with the sheep?*

Jesus told the disciples not to take anything extra with them, so that they would have to depend on hospitality and support from outside themselves.

- *Why is it so hard for us to trust that Jesus will give us all we need for the day, and all we need to do his kingdom work? What “faith lesson” was Jesus teaching them?*

Pentecost 4 (Proper 7)

June 21, 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.

Temptation is a most useful thing... (it) becomes a servant when we resist it, because it then produces a hatred of iniquity and a love of righteousness. And in our future immortal body it will neither have dominion nor rule, nor will it be a servant.

– Martin Luther –

Lectures on Romans, LW 25:319

Jeremiah 20:7-13

These verses give us a key insight into the nature of Jeremiah's ministry, as well as how he felt about his calling as a prophet. This was not something he had chosen, or even would have been interested in choosing, but a burden placed upon him by God himself, from which he knew he would never be free.

- *Why did Jeremiah wish he could cease being a prophet, and just keep his mouth shut? Have you ever wondered if life might actually be easier apart from faith?*
- *In verse 7, of what does Jeremiah accuse God?*

In the story of the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), the two disciples speak of their experience in hearing Jesus words by saying, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

- *How did Jeremiah use a similar metaphor in verse 20:9? Did Jeremiah experience this "burning" as a positive or negative thing?*

In the midst of his fears and misgivings, this lesson ends with a strong statement of faith from Jeremiah. His words are ones of strength and victory, in spite of circumstances that suggest the opposite.

- *Given the pain and hardship we often experience in faith, what is the Gospel promise in which we live? What assurance does God give us?*

Psalms 91:1-10 (11-16)

This psalm is an expression of trust in God's protection and rescue. Multiple metaphors are used to describe the refuge and safety we find in the Lord, including the image of a protective fortress, deliverance from a hunter's snare, the shelter of a mother-bird's wings, and a shield in hand-to-hand battle.

- *Which of these metaphors do you most resonate with? Why? How might each be applicable in different situations of life?*
- *Is this psalm suggesting that nothing bad will ever happen to people of faith? Or is there a deeper promise here?*

Romans 6:12-23

In this text, Paul confronts the inevitable false assumption that people often make when presented with the Gospel of grace. "If our sins are forgiven, why not go on sinning..."

- *How does this question itself show a lack of spiritual maturity on the part of the one arguing?*

Paul responds in a straightforward and sensible manner. Forgiveness and grace is not given to us by God to make it easier for us to sin, but as the means by which we would have the opportunity to struggle *against* sin.

- *In your actual faith experience, does being forgiven make you want to sin more? How does God's forgiveness give us hope that our sin can be conquered?*

Matthew 10:5a, 21-33

A lesson like this one is troubling to our modern sensibilities. Talk of persecution, hatred, and the rejection of family are difficult enough, but talk of the devil and hell add to the supernatural proportions of the tension Jesus describes in these verses. Far from being a soft and reassuring scene painted in pastel colors, this passage of Scripture confronts our assumptions about an easy faith.

- *In what sense does this passage illustrate and elaborate what Jesus meant when he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)?*

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus warns his disciples that they will face times of persecution. There are certainly places in the world where being a Christian can cost one his life. But it is often hard for many who do not face such circumstances to understand what real persecution is.

- *When have you experienced genuine hatred from others because of your faith? Or would you say you haven't?*

The word "atheism" comes from the Greek words meaning "without God." Many self-proclaimed atheists spend a lot of time discussing, stressing, and speaking against the concept of God. Their actual faith perspective might better be described as "anti-theism" ("against God").

- *In your experience, are those who vocally espouse atheism people who are disinterested in the subject of faith? How is their view a form of religion, not unlike others?*
- *Is atheism simply an indifference toward God and faith? Or is there something more intentional and sinister about unbelief? Who is the "master" being worshiped?*

In the Small Catechism and the explanation to the Ten Commandments, Martin Luther repeatedly uses the phrase "We should fear and love God so that ..."

- *How do Jesus' words in this lesson show us that God is one worthy of our fear and love? How do both of these come together only in faith?*

Pentecost 5 (Proper 8)

June 28, 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.

God did not give you your gifts for you to tickle yourself with them, but for you to help your neighbor with them when he needs it, and thus by your strength to bear his witness by your piety and honor to cover up his sin and to conceal his shame, as God through Christ has done for you and still does every day.

— Martin Luther —

Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (LW 21)

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Jeremiah draws a distinction between those prophets who speak only the word people want to hear and those who speak the truth. It is all too easy to proclaim that God is bringing peace and prosperity to the world. People will clamor to hear such a word. To speak a word of judgment, to declare that the world is not as it ought to be, invites criticism and rejection. For Jeremiah, the testing of a prophet's word was to be found in whether that prophecy comes to pass. A prophet who proclaims peace when God is bringing judgment into the world will quickly be found out as one whose word does not come from the Lord.

- *What are some examples in our time of preachers who proclaim a word that is popular but untrue?*

Psalms 119:153-160

In the face of persecution, the psalmist verbalizes his devotion to the Lord. He makes his case with God that he is faithful to Him and obeys His statutes, even as he asks God to plead his case before his enemies.

- *In what ways is the psalmist appealing to God based on his own faithfulness? How is God's saving work grounded on God's faithfulness and not our own?*

Romans 7:1-13

Many Christians struggle with a proper understanding of our relationship to the law. Scripture says that in Christ the law is "fulfilled" (Greek: πληρωω = *plero'oh*, see Mt. 5:17) and also that, in Christ, the law has its "end" (Greek: τελος = *telos*, see Rom. 10:4). Debates rage over whether Christians, in faith, are aided by the Spirit in keeping the law, or whether the Spirit's work in us has nothing at all to do with law, but is something different entirely. Romans offers some assistance in sorting out these questions. Paul speaks of Christians having died to the law, drawing a comparison with wives being free to re-marry without committing adultery when their husbands have died. Christians have been set free, by death, from our tie to the law. We are now, instead, bound to Christ.

- *What are some of the implications of how we speak about the law? What difference does it make if it is fulfilled or ended, if we are free from it or remain under its authority?*
- *How does the Lutheran understanding of Christians being "simultaneously saint and sinner" figure into this?*

Paul goes on in this section with a surprising explanation of how the law works in conjunction with sin, or how sin makes use of the law. Sin takes the opportunities provided by the law to increase our guilt. The prohibition against coveting, as an example, drove Paul to new depths of covetousness. The law did not create the sin, but was put to destructive use by sin. This destructive work of sin, bringing death through the law, drives us to our need for a Savior.

- *What are some other examples of sin using the prohibitions of the law to increase our rebellion?*

Matthew 10:34-42

The new kingdom that Jesus is bringing into the world is a kingdom of absolutes. There can be no partial obedience. This new kingdom is an all-or-nothing proposition. Jesus hasn't come to smooth over the rough places of our world. He has come to do battle with the darkness that holds our world hostage. He has come for a fight. This fight has real implications in the lives of believers. It is not a cosmic battle being waged elsewhere. It is a battle being waged in the hearts of God's chosen ones. Parents are set against children. Our foes are in our own households. Anyone who would stand in the way of absolute obedience is the enemy.

- *In what ways can those closest to us build up our faith? In what ways can they tear it down?*

The call to take up our crosses to follow Jesus has captured the imaginations of Christians for centuries. It has come to be understood as the defining characteristic of discipleship. The hidden danger in this is that if we go in search of crosses, they can replace the cross of Christ. We can, all too easily, attribute any suffering we might experience to bearing a cross, and our bearing of this cross becomes a testament to our own faith, rather than a testament to Christ. We are called to bear witness to Christ and his cross, his faithfulness, and not our own. Bearing this witness is bearing the true cross and it will bring us into conflict with the powers of sin and death that are at work in the world.

- *Where are some places you see people suffering for their faith?*
- *How do you discern whether suffering is for the sake of the Gospel, for some other purpose, or for no purpose at all?*

In baptism, we are drowned and raised to newness of life. This is God's work upon us, while we are yet sinners. The language in v. 39 of finding and losing one's life becomes a prefiguring of the promises of baptism.

- *What is the danger in looking inward for signs of faithfulness?*

Pentecost 6 (Proper 9)

July 5, 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.

“Sin is a powerful and cruel master and tyrant over all humankind on the whole earth, and no one can resist it, however wise, high, learned, and mighty he may be. ... Jesus Christ alone is the hero who can thwart that cruel, unconquerable foe. But it costs our Lord very dearly, for he must lose his life in doing it.”

— Martin Luther —

Lectures on Galatians, LW 26

Zechariah 9:9-12

This passage from Zechariah calls to mind Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. While the great generals and commanders of the day would ride into a city dressed in glory and majesty, God in the flesh entered the Holy City humbly, riding on a donkey. Despite the fact that his victory over sin and death puts to shame all earthly rulers with their short term victories, he does not come among his people with a demand for accolades and reverence. This is one of the most shocking realities of God's presence among us. He chooses to shroud himself in humility. He chooses to take on a lowly place for the sake of his people.

This marks quite a difference from most rulers. Most earthly leaders can't wait to take on the trappings of power and glory. Even the most humble of leaders among us ends up caught up in the will to draw honor and praise to ourselves. In Scripture, the One who actually is worthy of honor and praise does not seek it out. Instead, he comes with promises of setting prisoners free, restoring those who have fallen, bringing peace to a world scarred by violence. This is what it looks like when our king comes to us.

- *How do our own rulers and leaders reflect or not reflect what Zechariah shows us about God's presence among us?*
- *How do we hold together the humility described here with the majesty we usually associate with the Living God?*

Psalms 145:1-14

This psalm is an acrostic psalm which praises God for all of the great things he has done. Though the psalmist does not list anything specific that the Lord has done, he praises his name for His compassionate, loving, and faithful character.

- *In what ways is the psalmist seeking to share God's good reputation with the world? Why would that be important to do?*

Romans 7:14-25a

“I don't know why I did that.” How often have we thought or said those words? The best intentions — to lead a better life, to make better decisions, to be a better person — give way to the same old sins again and again and again. There is, within us, a war going on between the old and the new. The new person of faith wants to live according to God's will. The old person of sin in us refuses. We do the things we hate, things we know are wrong, things that don't square with who we want to be in the world, but we can't stop ourselves.

Sin takes the reins and drives us into darkness. There is no escaping this by our own will. Admonitions to just try harder — to be more diligent, to make a better effort — only lead to despair. They lead to an endless quest to accomplish what we cannot accomplish. It is for this reason that we need a Rescuer. We need one who will come into this situation, enter our hearts — where only darkness dwells — and shine his light, breaking the chains of sin and death. Thanks be to God that Christ Jesus came into the world for this very purpose!

- *What are some examples of doing those things we hate? What does it say about us that we persist in those things that do harm to our neighbors and to ourselves?*
- *When does the preaching of the law (what we do) need to give way to the promise of the Gospel (what he has done)?*

Matthew 11:25-30

The creation of faith — the reality that some people are grabbed by the Gospel while others are not — is one of the great mysteries of Christianity. Here we see a brief glimpse behind the curtain. The Father has hidden the truth of the Gospel from some and revealed it to others. He has hidden it from the wise and intelligent and revealed it to infants. The very people who should be at the leading edge of the Christian movement are stuck in the darkness of sin, while those no one would expect are propelled to the forefront.

- *How does the notion that God reveals the Gospel to some and not others strike you?*
- *What does the reality of election (God's choice) mean for the life of faith? In what ways does a teaching like this shape our evangelism efforts? In what ways does it undermine them?*

Jesus makes it clear that his yoke is for all those who are weary and carrying heavy burdens. Those weighed down by the power of sin are invited into the presence of Christ. The Gospel is only for sinners — and that is not a designation the religious and spiritual leaders are willing to accept. The refusal to recognize our sinfulness is what closes our eyes and ears to the Gospel. This is what the Spirit must break through in order to create faith. When that happens we are given the gift of trading our heavy burden of sin and death for the gentle yoke of righteousness and life. This finally, brings the rest and peace we are desperate for.

- *What does the Gospel sound like in the ears of those who do not think they are sinners?*
- *How does the image of weariness and carrying heavy burdens help shape our preaching/hearing of God's Word?*

Pentecost 7 (Proper 10)

July 12, 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.

“Where there is faith in Christ, there the Holy Spirit pours both comfort and childlike confidence into the heart. The heart no longer doubts God’s gracious will and help, because he has promised both grace and help, fulfillment and comfort, not because of our own worthiness but because of the merit and the name of Christ, his Son.”

— Martin Luther —

Sermon on Romans 8:12–17, WA 22

Isaiah 55:10–13

The power of God’s Word to create a new reality is once again on display in this passage from Isaiah. God’s Word, sent out from God himself through his messengers, accomplishes God’s purposes. It does not return empty. The imagery of rain and snow watering the fields is a helpful reminder that the timing of God’s purposes is not under our control.

When it comes to sharing the Word, we might look for immediate results, expecting our proclamation to take a congregation by storm and shape them into new beings overnight. But the image Isaiah gives takes time. The distance between rain falling from the heavens and bread being on the table can seem immense. But that is the kind of timing we can expect from God’s Word. It takes root and grows in the hearer over time.

- How does our patience or impatience impact how we hear these words? Does it ever seem as if Isaiah had it wrong, that God’s will is not being accomplished?

While promising an ultimate fulfillment of God’s purposes, Isaiah also clearly acknowledges that things are not currently as they should be. Thorns and briars still litter the fields. In the working of God’s purposes there is the real enemy of sin and death to be battled. There will be difficulties, periods of drought and damaging storms — but finally God’s Word gets the job done. God promises that.

- How do difficulties in life undermine our confidence in this Word? How do difficulties strengthen our faith? How does a life of comfort and ease undermine the power of this Word?

Psalms 65

The psalmist begins this hymn in the ESV saying, “Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion...” The Hebrew word translated in this passage as “due to” is *dumiyyah*. This word can be either a positive waiting in “silence,” or an unbearable waiting in silence as in times when we are suffering and cannot hold on any longer as we wait for God to act on our behalf. In this psalm it is a content waiting for God to act; he is the one who blots out our sin, he is the one who draws us into his presence, and he is the one who waters the earth in his perfect timing.

- How have you experienced silence before God? Has it been both positive and negative? What made the difference?
- In what ways have you seen God’s timing be perfect – never late and never early?

Romans 8:12–17

The distinction between spirit (Gk: *pneuma*) and flesh (Gk: *sarx, sarkos*) is compared to the distinction between adoption and slavery. Through the flesh we are enslaved to sin. We are caught in the realm of death. We live in the fear that slaves experience, the fear of having no permanent place in the household, the fear of being always subject to punishment, even the resentment of freedom lost.

By contrast, through the Spirit we have life and freedom. We are adopted as sons and daughters — heirs, with Christ, to the promises of God. The heir has a known and honored place in the house — a place that is assured. That reality takes away from us the fear that clings to our flesh and sets us free to live the life we’ve been given to live.

Be careful not to confuse this flesh/Spirit distinction with negating the value of life on earth in favor of life in heaven. Faith is an embracing of the life we now live as a life yoked to the Spirit of Christ.

- What is the danger of equating flesh/Spirit with earth/heaven? How does a confusion of those two undermine life in the Spirit?

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

The Parable of the Sower and its accompanying explanation present some interesting challenges. What begins as a description of a sower and seeds turns into a discussion of the different kinds of soil. The temptation is to lead the hearers to personal reflection on whether they are “good soil.” The problem is that there is no hope to be found in such a question. Soil can’t change itself. It can’t kill off the weeds or scare off the crows. It can’t turn itself into a rich field instead of a rocky path. It just is what it is. If, upon reflection, one concludes they are not good soil, there is little to be done about that.

The key here is to consider the sower. His valuable seed is tossed about with no concern for where it lands. Roads and ditches, weed patches and plowed fields are all treated the same: They all receive the seed. This sower is not concerned with being careful or frugal with the seed. His mission is to sow it everywhere.

- Why do we so often fall into the trap of wanting to categorize everyone, including ourselves, when we hear this parable?
- What does this notion of an extravagant sower tell us about how God desires his Word to be shared? How does a focus on the sower’s actions shape our reading of the text differently than when we focus on the seed or the types of soil?

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?*

Pentecost 9 (Proper 12)

July 26, 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.

“God is a master who knows how to convert whatever would hinder and harm us into that which furthers and helps us. Whatever is intended to take our life must preserve it. Whatever would cause us to sin and damn us must help to strengthen our faith and hope, must make our prayer more fervent and cause it to be heard more richly.”

— Martin Luther —

Sermon on John 15, LW 24

Deuteronomy 7:6-9

It's a rather strange thing to imagine the Creator of all would choose from among all the peoples of the earth one nation to be his people. What was so special about Israel that made them worthy of choosing? This passage from Deuteronomy points us in the direction of an answer. There was nothing special about Israel. Nothing about them stood out. For reasons hidden within the mystery of God, he loved them and made a covenant with them.

This status of “chosen” (Hebrew: *bakhar*) wasn't something they had earned. It wasn't an accomplishment they could point to with pride. It was simply their reality, their blessing. From among all peoples, God chose them.

- *What difference does it make whether Israel was worthy of God's choosing?*
- *Is there reason to believe God chose them because he knew they would be faithful? How does their history with God reflect their degree of faithfulness?*
- *How is the seemingly arbitrary choosing of Israel a precursor of God's seemingly arbitrary choice of us as the elect? What does Israel's frequent faithlessness tell us about our own struggles with faith?*

Psalm 125

Those who put their trust in the Lord will never be moved. The psalmist compares those who trust in God to a mighty mountain that cannot be destroyed. And again, he compares the Lord to a mountain range that surrounds his people, like the mountains that overlook Jerusalem.

- *In what ways does God's strength and protection for his people remind you of the majesty of mountains?*

Romans 8:28-39

Divine election (God's choosing) is one of the most difficult notions for us to wrap our heads around. In many ways it is an affront to our sense of fairness. The choosing of some suggests the not choosing of others. Imagining God not choosing someone for salvation is terrifying thought.

We have attempted to solve this problem for ourselves by trying to give the human will more of a role in salvation. Since election seems unfair, we try to find a way for God's beloved to be worthy of that love. Paul will have none of that in this passage from Romans. God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified his chosen ones. There is only one actor here. God is the one saving. We move ourselves

into dangerous territory when we try to get behind his choices.

- *How does our discomfort with election relate to our deep-seated lack of trusting God to be God (original sin)? What makes us think that God might make a mistake in his choosing?*

Paul speaks of the blessings that God showers upon his chosen ones with some of the most beautiful words of comfort and hope in all of scripture. The world is filled with forces that are at work to tear us out of Christ's grip. But with these words we are assured that nothing in all of creation has the power to separate us from God in Christ Jesus. This powerful promise is one of the boldest statements of the Gospel to be found in Scripture. It puts the powers of darkness in their proper place — beneath Jesus' feet.

- *What are some of the things we worry will separate us from God? How does this word of promise ring through our doubts and fears?*
- *Why do we need to hear the promise of the Gospel again and again?*

Matthew 13:44-52

“Have you understood all this?” That's the question Jesus had for his disciples at the end of his sermon. Their answer was quite predictable. Of course they understood. What's not to understand about basic farming and fishing practices or trading everything for a surpassing treasure that one has stumbled upon? What's not to understand about a simple description of how a plant grows or what yeast does to a loaf of bread? It's all perfectly clear.

But how much did they really understand? Did they really grasp why such talk would increasingly raise the ire of the religious and political leaders? Did they understand how this was different than anything they had heard before? Do we? The parables Jesus tells are so simple on the surface. But there is something mysterious and hidden about them, hidden enough that, in the end, when the moment came, none of the disciples understood enough to stand with Jesus. They were all looking for something else. The temptation as we race through these parables is to overlook the mystery, the strangeness in favor of the familiar.

- *In what ways have you experienced God's kingdom as a hidden treasure? How is its hiddenness at odds with our calling to share it?*
- *What sense does it make to sell everything for one pearl? What is Jesus saying about himself here?*

Pentecost 10 (Proper 13)

August 2, 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.

“Thus we learn from these words that the apostle regards the servants of Christ as stewards of the mysteries of God. That is, they should regard themselves and be regarded by others as persons who preach and give to the people of God nothing but Christ and what belongs to Christ.”

— Martin Luther —

Sermons on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, 1522. WA 10

Isaiah 55:1-5

God asks of his people why they waste their money and labor on that which cannot truly help them. He has provided for them wine and water without price; it's theirs for the taking. To his people, Israel is given an everlasting covenant.

- *What are some ways that we focus on or devote our resources to things that don't really matter, things that can't really satisfy us? What drives us to this?*
- *How does God's Word bring us back to the main thing?*

Within this covenant blessing is an understanding that Israel will be a light to the nations. God's glory will be revealed among them, not only for their own sake, but for the sake of the Gentiles (that is, the unbelievers outside of the covenant). Through Israel, God will extend his blessings to all the world.

- *How does Israel become a light to the nations? How is this prophecy fulfilled?*
- *How does the church fill this role of light to the nations? What are some ways we carry God's light into the world?*

Psalms 136:1-9 (23-26)

God's love for his people is rooted in the covenant he made with them before Israel was even a people. His love is steadfast and faithful which is a product of his very character and nature. This psalm focuses on God's work in the heavens and on earth. He made all there is and sustains it. The constant refrain of the psalmist is show his devotion and awe for the God of all gods, “for his steadfast love endures forever.”

- *How are “praise” and “thanksgiving” two different modes of appreciating God?*
- *What does the psalmist's confession about the Lord's steadfast love point hearers to do or think?*

Romans 9:1-5 (6-13)

Paul's lament for his people reminds us that God's saving work in history first belonged to a people that did not include us. When the decisive moment of salvation comes in Jesus Christ, God's work is extended to all peoples. While the early church quickly shifts from a focus on God's covenant with Israel to the new mission to the Gentiles, Paul's own people are, seemingly, left behind.

Paul is not willing to declare that they have been left behind. God's covenant with Israel, his promises to them, have not

been nullified. One of our defining beliefs about God is that he is faithful to his promises, despite the sin of his people. Paul's desire for his kindred, however, is the same desire he has for all peoples — that they would know Christ and his benefits.

- *How is our understanding of God's relationship with Israel shaped by our understanding of God's enduring faithfulness?*
- *Does holding on to the belief in God's covenant faithfulness undermine our conviction that Christ, alone, is the source of salvation? What theological problems arise when speaking faithfully of Israel?*

Matthew 14:13-21

Five loaves and two fish. That's not a lot to work with. Surrounded by thousands of people and nearing supper-time, that's all the disciples could come up with. From their perspective, the situation was hopeless. They wanted Jesus to send the people away.

But Jesus does not send people away empty. When you are in his presence, he doesn't say, “It's getting close to supper-time. You should probably go home.” He doesn't say, “You are a sinner. Come back when you've taken care of that problem and we can talk.” He says, “Come in. Sit down. Let me get you something to eat.”

So Jesus took those five loaves and two fish, and with them he fed the multitude until everyone was full. He would not send anyone away hungry. Jesus created a feast where there had been hunger. He created abundance where there had been want. Everyone went home full that night.

At times, you may be tempted to think God would give up on someone like you, or on a world like ours. By all rights, he should send us away as not being worth his time and energy. But he doesn't. He will not rest until you are safely home, until you are fully fed, until you have been made completely new.

- *What are some of the ways we doubt God's ability to provide for our need? Where have you seen God bring something out of nothing?*
- *How does this abundant meal connect with the parables of abundance that have led up to it? Again, who is the actor?*
- *How is the real miracle here that Jesus moved people to share what they had?*
- *How do our attempts to de-mythologize the story of Jesus reflect the same old problem of original sin? In what way are we tempted to put ourselves at the center of the story?*

Pentecost 11 (Proper 14)

August 9, 2026



“The first duty of a preacher of the Gospel is, through his revealing of the law and of sin, to rebuke and to turn into sin everything in life that does not have the Spirit and faith in Christ as its base.”

– Martin Luther –

Bible Commentary on Romans

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.

Job 38:4-18

Job experienced much pain and hardship in his life. Throughout many chapters, we hear his prayers of heartache. We also hear the words of his “friends” who end up blaming Job for all that has happened to him. Job longs to speak with God himself, saying,

“I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me.” (Job 23:4-5)

In the lesson for today Job gets his answer from God — one that he likely did not expect. We can hear the sarcasm in God’s tone as he addresses Job. God never answers the questions of “why” that Job had asked, rather, God questions Job about his power as a man versus God’s power as the Creator saying, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding” (v.4).

- When we deal with God, are we in a conversation between equals? How was Job’s response from God even more humbling than what Job had already gone through?
- Though Job had argued, complained, and questioned God’s justice, how does God’s response show that he had been listening to Job’s prayer? Did Job really need an explanation, or did he need to know that God was still with him? What’s the difference between an answer and a promise?

Psalms 18:1-6 (7-16)

The psalmist sings joyfully that he has a secure refuge in the Lord, even as he describes the forces arrayed against him. Even in the face of destruction and death, he trusts in the stronghold of protection that comes from his Lord and God.

- In what ways have you experienced God as your security? Is it always obvious? Does faith assume everything will turn out okay; or does faith trust that God is in control? Is there a difference?
- How does this psalm express the very same thing that Job experienced? (see above) Is God strong enough to bear with our doubts and fears, without forsaking us?

Romans 10:5-17

For Paul, the heart and voice are intricately tied together. When a people have received the gift of faith and trust the Lord with all their heart, they can’t help but express it. There is a parallelism between the phrases of Romans 10:10, “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” — both go hand in hand.

- Why is Paul adamant that there will be an outward expression of an inward faith and trust in Christ Jesus? Can it ever be one without the other? Why or why not?

- What would Martin Luther say is the source of our being able to call on the name of the Lord in the first place? Why is the ordering of God’s act and our act so important?

Paul goes on in his letter to indicate that there are those who have never heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. He asks a rhetorical question to get them thinking, “How will people call on the Lord if they’ve never even heard of him?” He challenges the Romans to get out there and preach the Word so that all would hear the Gospel message and come to faith in Christ.

- What is your role in sharing the Gospel so that others may come to faith? How are you doing with that call? [Does it frighten you? Have you grown in comfort with it? Do you need some encouragement?]

Back in Romans 1:16 Paul said the Gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” This is key to our Lutheran understanding of the gift of faith: it is the message that has the power to bring about faith. Through Scripture, preaching, and through believers sharing the good news, the Holy Spirit is active to create faith.

- Why is it important to give proper credit to God’s Word as the basis for our faith as well as the source and power of our faith?

Matthew 14:22-33

Right after Jesus fed five thousand people a simple meal of fish and bread, he sent his disciples away on a boat to go ahead of him to the other side of the lake. He went up on the mountain to pray in solitude even as the men in the boat drifted further away from him. A storm kicked up and the disciples became gravely concerned for their own safety. They were terrified when they saw a figure walking across the water toward them thinking it was a ghost. But Jesus shouted out to calm their fears, “Fear not! It’s me!” In that moment Peter got a great idea to walk out to Jesus on the water and Jesus consented. As the wind picked up Peter took his eyes off of Jesus in fear and he began to sink into the water. Jesus reached out for him and rescued him and they all got in the boat as Jesus calmed the storm.

- What happens to us when we take our eyes off of Jesus? Left to our own strength, how is this the fate of us all?
- How does his calling out to Jesus give us clear evidence that God was already in Peter? How are we all saved by calling on Christ? How is faith something that he does for us and not something we do for ourselves?

Pentecost 12 (Proper 15)

August 16, 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.

*Faith takes Christ captive in his word,
when he's angriest, and makes out of his cruel words a
comforting inversion as we see here.*

*You say, the woman responds, that I am a dog. Let it be, I will
gladly be a dog; now give me the consideration that you give a
dog. Thus she catches Christ with his own words,
and he is happy to be caught.*

— Martin Luther, Sermon on Mark 7 —

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

It's so much easier to live faithfully when we are able to detect God's presence and movement in our lives. When we don't feel that as strongly it becomes a bit more difficult to be obedient and to trust in the promises of the Lord. When we have to wait a long time to see the fruits of God's promises in our lives we tend to forget, get lazy, or even disillusioned.

As Israel awaited the fullness of their future salvation, the Lord gave instructions and encouragement to the prophet of how to live faithfully in the present time. God urged the people to "keep justice, and do righteousness" in the meantime. This word meant for them to keep the Sabbath day holy and to hold fast to God's covenant promises, to love and serve the Lord even as they await what God will do to bring others into the fold.

- In both the biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew, the terms "righteousness" and "justice" come from the same root as the word for "what is right." Is it possible for real justice to exist in a society where people have no sense of moral righteousness?
- The New Testament (especially Paul's writings) say that it is faith and trust in God that makes us right (justified) before God? How does the Spirit's gift of faith make things right between us and God? What effect does that have in our relationship with others?

Psalms 67

Drawing on the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, the psalmist chants a blessing to the people. When God's face "shines" on his people there is blessing and honor for them, and his name becomes known in all the earth.

- When have you experienced someone's face "shining" on you? What does that mean?

This God who looks so favorably on his people is referred to as both a "judge" and a "guide." Because of this, he is worthy of their praise and thanksgiving.

- People like to say "Don't judge me; I don't need anyone to tell me what to do." Why is it many people (including ourselves) often reject having a judge or guide in our lives? In faith, how are both of these actually a good thing?

Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-29

In the early Church, those who had come to know salvation in Jesus Christ wondered what would become of the Jews who did not know the Savior. Paul struggled with this, too. But

he knew salvation — in Old Testament times — had always rested in the hands of God, and that God was faithful, even when we are not. In this lesson, Paul expresses his hope that God's attention to Gentiles will somehow incite his own people to "jealousy" — not simply envy or resentment, but renewed zeal for the Lord.

- As Christians, we believe that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6) and that "there is no other name given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). How can we hold this truth with certainty, while at the same time, not putting ourselves in the place of deciding who is saved and who is not?

Paul continues his teaching and discussion of Israel's place in the heart of God by saying, "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

- How is this good news for us who believe in Christ, that God's gifts and promises are irrevocable? If God could back out of his promise to Israel, what would that say to us who rely for salvation on his promise in Christ?

Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus was approached by a Canaanite woman whose daughter is afflicted with a demon. She came in sheer desperation, but Jesus doesn't say one word. His disciples are clearly very uncomfortable with the situation and beg Jesus to send her away. Jesus finally answers her claiming he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.

- Does it ever feel to you as if God does not care about your concerns, or that God has more important things than your life to be concerned about?

We need to be clear about who is in charge in this story. Jesus is not mistaken or in need of correction. This is not an indication of a "lack of sensitivity" on his part. He knew exactly what he was doing.

As in all things, Jesus' goal was and is faith. Though his response may seem harsh to our ears, Jesus spoke exactly the right words to illicit faith from the woman.

- How is it that only in being judged that we understand mercy? Why is it that only when we are separated from God that we understand the true meaning of grace?
- How is faith something that goes to the Lord despite everything that stands in the way?
- In what sense did Jesus' harsh response to the woman actually put the words of faith in her mouth? That is to say, how was her confession of faith shaped by the Word of the Lord himself?

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?*

Pentecost 14 (Proper 17)

August 30, 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.

*So, too, pure love is a rare thing on earth.
Not that love in itself is impure, but too often it is mere pretense.
John implies as much in his words (1 Jn 3, 18), "My little children,
let us not love in word, neither with the tongue;
but in deed and truth."*

– Martin Luther –

Sermon on Romans 12, Church Postil

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Certainly, Jeremiah was a man who knew what it was like to be persecuted as a servant of the Lord. Here, the prophet calls upon God to take vengeance on those who tormented him and he would like it to happen as quickly as possible. The prophet protests to the Lord, citing his own innocence and faithfulness, and asks why God has not protected him.

- *Have you ever felt like Jeremiah? Have you felt as though God's promise has not come true for you, in spite of your commitment to Him?*
- *How is Jeremiah's ego at work in his complaint? In what sense does his lack of satisfaction come from his focus on himself?*

Beginning in verse 19, God responds to Jeremiah's prayer with a promise, assuring the prophet that he has not been abandoned. God says to the prophet, "If you return, I will restore you." (Jer. 15:19) That word is שׁוּב (*shuv*) meaning to turn back or repent — i.e. return to a prior belief.

Imagine God saying to the prophet, and to us when we are struggling, "If you turn back to me, I will turn back to you." Jeremiah had to repent of his self-pity and failure to trust that God was truly with him and that things would work out in God's time, not Jeremiah's.

- *Why is it important to know that God remains committed to the work of his Word, even when circumstances don't seem to indicate any success? In what sense is the life of faith always a matter of turning back to trust in the Lord?*

Psalms 26

Like Jeremiah, the psalmist calls upon God as one who has been a faithful servant. He says to God, "Judge me and see if I have lived with integrity. Test me, Lord, and try me; examine my heart and my mind."

- *Do you find the psalmist to be a little arrogant or presumptuous in these verses? Would you be so bold as to pray in such a way?*
- *Assuming the writer is sincere in the way he describes his life, what do you think is at the center of his concern? What does he want from God? In what sense does the manner of his life show that God has already been at work in him?*

Romans 12:9-21

Scripture assures us that God's grace actually produces something in us, seen in the fruit of our words and deeds. People of faith will exhibit certain traits that we are reminded of again and again. Though they are not yet

perfected in us, the arc of the Christian's life will be marked by the attributes Paul describes here.

One such attribute is love. We are reminded in 1 John 4:19 that we are only able to love because God first loved us. We are not permitted to exact vengeance upon our enemies — that role is reserved for God alone. Instead we are to share, love, and show kindness to our enemies; our love is to be "sincere." The Greek word here is *an-hypokritos* which means "without hypocrisy."

- *What are some of the personal character qualities that are highlighted in the verses? Which do you tend to exemplify the most? Which do you not?*
- *Do you ever struggle with loving someone that is hard to love? How do you love "without hypocrisy?" To whom do you turn when you struggle with this?*

Matthew 16:21-28

Right before this part of the chapter, Jesus had instructed his followers to beware of the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He wanted them to be discerning of their law-based teachings. Then he showed them a different way.

He spoke of God's forgiveness as "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," asserting that whatever they bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever they forgive here will be forgiven in heaven.

- *Why did Jesus need to give the disciples these specific instructions to contrast the teaching of the Jewish leaders in comparison with the approach they were to take in regard to sin?*

Immediately after this, Jesus began to tell his disciples what was about to happen to him. He would be arrested, tried, and put to death, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. Peter took great offense to Jesus' words and pulled him aside to chastise him. Jesus reacted strongly to Peter — calling him "Satan" and scolding him fiercely. Jesus showed his disciples the way of his own cross, and that we are to follow him no matter what it costs.

- *Why did Peter have such a hard time with Jesus' prediction of his own death and resurrection? Why do we?*
- *Why are Jesus' words about his death such an affront to the world? Why are they difficult even for those who are followers of Jesus?*
- *What does it mean in our own life of faith to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Jesus unto death?*