

Pentecost 26 (Proper 28)

November 17, 2024



We, together with all our gifts, however great they may be, are nothing if God is not at our side. If He withdraws His hand, our wisdom, knowledge, etc., amount to nothing.

– Martin Luther –

Exposition on Galatians 2:13

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.

Daniel 12:1–3

In the verses leading up to this lesson, Daniel spoke of the end-times, when the kings of the earth would rise up against God's people. He said, "There will be a time of trouble, such as never has been" (v. 1). The word for "trouble" in this passage in Hebrew is *tsa-rah*. This word can refer to everything from an enemy, adversary, persecutor, oppressor, to a more general sense of distress, embarrassment, or danger.

- What is your direct experience with "trouble?" How does sin create trouble for us? How does God rescue us repeatedly from trouble?

The last days will be a time of trouble, like none before them. However, this will also be the time (as Daniel proclaimed) of deliverance for God's people.

- In what ways does it seem like in our time there is an increase in lawlessness and impending judgment?
- What is the good news in the midst of all this "trouble?" (Or "who" is the good news in the face of trouble?)

Psalm 16

David sang to the Lord about the joys of a life with the one God. Because of the Lord he experienced refuge, an excellent company of friends, as well as the assurance that God would not abandon him to Sheol (the place of the dead). Rather, with God, he has a delightful inheritance and the knowledge that the Lord is watching over him.

- How does God's Word give you the assurance that you are never left alone, even in death?
- What foreshadowing of Holy Communion do you see in this psalm? What does it mean to say "the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup"? (v. 5) How are we promised in Communion that the Lord is literally "before me"? (v. 8)

On the other hand, for those who turn away from the One God and run after idols, David lamented that their lives were filled with sorrow and troubles that never seemed to end. There is no guarantee that faith will keep us from sorrows and pain, but when we trust in the Lord we know we have a refuge like no other.

- How does our attitude about trials change when we trust in the Lord — as opposed to a different approach to life where we trust in other things (including ourselves)?
- In what sense does trust in God bring about its own blessing? What does faith free us from?

Hebrews 10:11–25

One of the greatest insults in Middle Eastern culture is the action of removing one's shoe and hitting another person or an object with it. The sole of the shoe is considered to be dirty because it touches the ground and it is attached to the lowest part of the body, the foot. In this passage, the author of Hebrews said that Christ came to earth at the precise time to put an end to his enemies and to make of them a "footstool" for his feet. Christ, the great high priest, is victorious over the enemies of sin, death, and the devil.

- Read Genesis 3:15. Why do you think many have seen this as a prophetic verse about the coming of Christ?

Jesus was the only one who did not have to offer sacrifices for his own sin. He was perfect and holy, unlike the priests who had to repeatedly make the same sacrifice many times a day for the people's sins and their own. Through Christ there is no longer the need to make sacrifices such as what was done in the temple and tabernacle in the days of old.

- How is the cross of Christ the one true sacrifice? If we believe that to be true, why do we continue to try to "assist" God in matters of salvation through good works?

Mark 13:1–13

Perhaps you've visited some of the great architectural edifices of the world, such as the Eiffel Tower, San Francisco Bay Bridge, or the Sydney Opera House. Standing near something so amazing and wondrous can give us a sense of pride in our human creativity and ingenuity. The disciples of Jesus were impressed with the great stones that made up the Jerusalem temple. They were in awe at the structure and how it could have been erected in such splendor.

- When have you experienced genuine "awe"?

Jesus put a damper on the disciples' sense of wonder as he predicted the destruction of the temple. He let them know that what man has put into being is nothing compared to what God is doing in the world. God has the power to create and destroy, the power to give life and take it away, the power to curse, and the power to bless and forgive.

- In what sense is God at work in the world through the things people accomplish? In what sense is God also at work, despite what people accomplish?
- Jesus told his disciples that the gospel had to be proclaimed to all nations before the end would come. In what way do we as the Church need to take this seriously? How is our mission part of God's greater mission?