



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.

Did God call me on account of my holy life? Or on account of my pharisaical religion? Or on account of my prayers, fastings, and works? Never. Well, then, it is certain God did not call me on account of my blasphemies, persecutions, oppressions. What prompted Him to call me? His grace alone.

—Martin Luther—

Commentary on Galatians

Isaiah 43:16–21

This promise from God was spoken to the Jewish people during their time of exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. Those who were exiled were given a message of hope that God would restore them. Just as God brought Israel out of Egypt and made a way through the Red Sea on dry land, God would rescue his people from exile and bring them back to their beloved homeland.

- *In what ways is it comforting to recall what God has done in the past to save his people when we are in a bind today? How does God's salvation of people from the past give us faith and hope for our present?*
- *How does all creation benefit from God's redemption and our restoration as people of faith?*

Psalms 126

Have you ever awakened from a dream that had you paralyzed in fear? When we finally startle awake and get our bearings, we realize that it was all just a bad dream. A sense of relief washes over us as we figure out that it was not real, that we are fine.

- *Why do you think dreams often come from troubles we are concerned about in waking hours?*

In this passage, the psalmist uses the image of “dreaming” in a positive sense, saying: “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, were like those who dream” (Ps. 126:1). In times of great joy and blessing, people will often use the expression: “All my dreams have come true!”

- *Why do we associate future hopes and wishes with “dreams”? Strictly speaking, is there a difference between practical plans and intentions and “dreams”?*

Philippians 3:(4b–7) 8–14

What is valued by the world is not what is valued in the kingdom of God. Paul understood this very deeply, having been one who strove for “success” in his religious life by living in strict adherence to the law. Paul spoke of his impeccable credentials. According to Jewish standards of the law, he was a “blameless” example of the religious life.

But later, having come to faith in Christ, Paul looked back on his former religious life and said, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered

the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

- *What changed in Paul? What is this new type of righteousness that he is talking about? How is it different from what he used to seek after?*

It can be tough to live in a world that values titles, promotions, awards, and honors. If you want to sell more, have more customers to make more money you have to be able to show the symbols of that success which are expensive homes, cars, and lifestyles. When this same kind of worldly thinking is applied to faith and spiritual “success,” Luther referred to it as a “Theology of Glory.” He spoke of it as one of the most common traps a Christian can fall for.

- *Is our Christian faith simply a means for self-improvement? In what sense is Christianity more than just a “self help” movement?*

Luke 20:9–20

The parable of the wicked tenants is filled with violent and troubling imagery which points a finger at us in accusation. But we cannot dismiss the story simply because it makes us uncomfortable. Underlying this parable is the fact that Jesus would soon be put to death by the very people he entrusted with all that was his.

- *We have been employed by God as his stewards. How are we like the tenants in this story? In what sense are we responsible for the death of God's Son?*

People often claim: “possession is nine-tenths of the law.” In this parable, the tenants seek to claim the property for themselves, even though they know full well they are not the heirs of the owner. In the text of this story is a play on the Greek word *klay-ro-no-mia* — which can mean both “inheritance” and “possession of property.” Clearly, the tenants were determined to take the vineyard by any means necessary, even by murdering the heir. To “possess” the property was their strategy.

- *What often happens when we covet what others have? Does it typically end well? In what sense does coveting often lead to other sins?*
- *In the parable, do you think that it was just land that the tenants wanted? How were their actions also an attempt to supplant the role and authority of the master?*