

Pentecost 6

July 20, 2025



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.

We should learn to wait for God. No matter how other things turn out – whether a persecution comes upon us instead of the presence of God which we had expected and which He had promised or whether we feel the wrath of God instead of the grace of God – we should say: I believe. I am baptized. I have absolution. I have the divine promise of grace and mercy.

– Martin Luther

On Genesis 26:14–16

Genesis 18:1–10a (10b–14)

Sarah had longed for a child her whole adult life, it seemed, and in her old age she had given up hope of ever holding a son in her arms. Near the oaks of Mamre, the Lord visited the aged couple. Abraham saw the Lord in the form of three men and he ran to greet them outside of his tent. He graciously offered to serve them by washing their feet, feeding them with the finest of what he had to give, and allowing them a place of quiet respite. When they had finished their meal they asked about Sarah, “Where is she?” And as Sarah listened from inside the tent, the Lord proclaimed that the next year about that same time of the year, Sarah would have a son. Sarah’s response was perhaps an inappropriate one, as the Lord asked why she laughed.

- *Have you ever laughed in a highly emotional moment, when the more appropriate response would have been to cry? Could that be what happened to Sarah in that moment?*

Sarah knew God’s promise, that she and Abraham would have a son and Abraham would be the father of many nations. Her comment about herself is very telling though, “I am worn out.” The word Sarah uses (in the Hebrew בָּלָה = *ba-lah*) which is more akin to obsolete, or useless in matters such as these. She is certain she cannot conceive and bear a child. The evidence is overwhelming. The whole concept at this point in her life seems preposterous. But, the man at the tent says, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (In the Hebrew, the word for “hard” is פָּלָא = *pa-lah* meaning amazing or wonderful.)

- *Notice the two words in Hebrew, what is balah becomes palah. Do you think there is a play on words here that the first readers of this story would have caught?*
- *Do you think Sarah doubted God’s ability to fulfill his promise, or that she doubted something else? (See verse 18:12)*
- *In what ways are God’s promises meant to give us pleasure?*

Psalms 27: (1–6), 7–14

Waiting is often one of the hardest things we ever have to do in life. Most of us are more comfortable “doing” rather than waiting. Waiting seems passive, rather than active. It requires patience and attention. It often seems like a waste of precious time.

The psalmist urged others to wait for the Lord. In the midst of his own trials he recalled how God said to him, “Seek my face, search for me, learn from me.” His response to God’s

call was to plead for the Lord to remain with him, and not to hide His face from his servant.

When we wait for the Lord the way that the psalmist suggests, we are not being passive — just biding our time until God decides to respond. Instead we are intentionally stopping and looking forward in hope and in confidence that God will not forsake us. The word translated as “wait” (Hebrew = יָחַל *qa-wah*) is the word for hope.

- *How can we wait without hope? Is it even possible?*
- *How is hope a matter of confidence in the promises of God?*

Colossians 1:21–29

St. Paul proclaimed that the glory of this mystery of faith is “Christ in you!” What a powerful statement. Those who were alienated from God, excluded from his Kingdom, hostile to his Word in their thinking and acting, are now reunited with the one who gave himself up so that all who believe might be saved. Now, this one who died for the sins of humanity stands next to us and declares us holy and blameless in the sight of the Father.

- *In what ways did Jesus take on our entire humanity? Why does that matter?*
- *How does this mystery, that Paul talks about, affect you as an individual? What does “Christ in you,” mean to you?*

In his explanation of the Second Article of the Creed in his Large Catechism, Luther explains what it means to be reconciled to God through Christ, “He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s favor and grace.”

- *How often do you think of yourself as a poor and lost creature? Why is it important to remember?*

Luke 10:38–42

As Luke recalls the visit Jesus made to the home of Mary and Martha, he notes that Martha was distracted and anxious. We live in a world where there are so many tasks, events, and opportunities to capture our attention that we become overwhelmed, stressed, and overburdened just like Martha. Jesus calls us to come and sit at his feet, to seek him in the way the psalmist encouraged. It is there that we find restoration and peace.

- *What sorts of things are causing you to be overburdened and overwhelmed? How can you put those aside in order to seek the face of Christ instead?*