

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?