

Pentecost 15 (Proper 18A)

September 6, 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.

*“Owe no man anything, but to love one another.”
To me, clearly and simply it means: Not as men, but as Christians, are we under obligations. Our indebtedness should be the free obligation of love. It should not be compulsory and law-prescribed... Love’s obligation enables a man to do more than is actually required of him.*

– Martin Luther–

Sermon on Romans 13, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Ezekiel 33:7-9

In an ancient city, the watchmen stood on the walls and kept an eye out for the sign of approaching enemies or natural disasters. They were responsible for the safety of all within the city — including themselves!

If the people of the city did not heed the sound of the warning trumpet and did not act, the watchman would not be held responsible, said the Lord. But if the watchman failed to do his duty to warn others of impending trouble, then the watchman would be held responsible for the bad that happened on his watch.

The Lord made the prophet Ezekiel a “watchman” over the house of Israel and gave him the great responsibility of sending a message of warning to the people concerning their wicked behavior. If Ezekiel failed to deliver the message from the Lord God then the Lord would make him culpable for the people’s iniquity. If the message was given to the people and the people did not listen, it would be the people’s own fault.

- *In what ways is it our responsibility to teach and admonish both unbelievers and fellow believers alike about disobedience to God’s will? Where does our responsibility begin and end?*
- *In what sense does a watchman’s job also require patience and obedience?*
- *How was this message not just a message for individuals, but a message for the whole community to repent and be obedient to the Lord so that he might restore Israel?*

Psalms 32:1-7

The Lord calls us to repentance but sometimes we are stubborn and refuse to submit to his will in our lives. With disobedience comes correction. When forgiveness comes to us it is a great blessing. The psalmist prays that all people would not be silent in the face of the Lord, but instead open their hearts and mouths to repent and seek reconciliation with God. When sin plagues our lives, it is a heavy, overwhelming burden. When forgiveness is granted to us, the weight it lifted and we can live in freedom, giving thanks to God and rejoicing in his holy presence.

- *Why are we so often reluctant to confess our sins and shortcomings to the Lord? Is it because we think we have no sin to confess?*
- *Has there been a time when you kept silent in the face of God and felt the terrible weight of unrepented sin? Did you confess eventually? How did that change things for you?*

Romans 13:1-10

St. Paul asserts that love is the fulfillment of the law. Doing good to others is the epitome of obedience to the laws of God. Yet he begins this chapter with instructions about being obedient to the civil government. Paul says our obedience is required because those who have positions of authority are put there by God himself. But note that Scripture mentions nothing about whether those authorities are even “Christian.”

- *How does God work through the civil government to make his ways known to all the earth — even when that government is not explicitly Christian?*
- *In this society where it is easy to criticize governing authorities — and on a daily basis, people openly show disrespect to elected leaders — in what ways does it challenge you to think about your Christian responsibility to respect the civil authority?*

Simply reading this text aloud will immediately give rise to questions about the limits of our obedience and which governing authorities we must or may not obey. Certainly, Scripture shows there are times when “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

- *When Scripture commands obedience to authority, why are we so quick to want to talk about “exceptions to the rule?” In what ways do people try to get around this Romans text based on “religious” excuses? Have you seen this in our culture recently?*

Matthew 18:1-20

In this passage, the disciples want to know who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus speaks of the “kingdom,” he is describing what faith is like in our lives. Faith is not about being the greatest in an earthly sense, rather he points to the little children around him to show his followers that they must become humble and trusting like children to be the greatest in his kingdom. Being like children, receiving them, and protecting them from harm (including spiritual harm) is what is required of Jesus’ followers.

- *How do we get tripped up in “bigger-is-better” thinking in our faith communities and in our own lives?*
- *How are we asked to turn from being “big” to being “small” again in our journey with Christ? What does genuine Christian humility look like?*
- *In what sense does our life of discipleship reflect a child-like faith?*
- *As a congregation are children truly important to you?*