



## 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 cling to the Word with patience and not let go of it even though the period of waiting for help last a hundred years. For God delays action out of grace, in our best interest, that our faith may become strong and great and He may give more abundantly what He has promised.*

– Martin Luther –

Comment on Genesis 31

### Amos 5:18–24

The word of the Lord is biting and harsh. “I hate your offerings and solemn assemblies,” says the Lord. Our God is more concerned with his people truly seeking him and the way in which we care for others. In the verses leading up to this text, God expressed his displeasure that his people have failed to hear the truth and live according to his will, but rather have lived in sin and evil. He urged them to be faithful and to seek justice.

The Hebrew word for “justice” (*mishpat*) is a term associated with the courtroom and the punishment of criminals — as in “the criminal justice system.” In the context of God’s judgment, it was a word used to indicate that sinners would “get what they deserve.”

- *How does this definition of the word justice help explain the images in verse 19? In what sense does God’s justice pursue us, even when we think we have escaped?*

In modern religious circles, the word “justice” has taken on a very different meaning from the way it was originally used in Scripture. “Justice” is often used as a catch-all word to refer to acts of charity toward and assistance of those in need, or to policies that favor the disadvantaged.

- *Why did the Lord indicate that he hated the “solemn assemblies” and “offerings” of his people? How would God remark about our worship and offerings today?*
- *In what sense does doing justice — i.e., doing what is right and fair in the eyes of God — require us to address inequities, especially in legal matters? Has this word changed over time?*
- *In a courtroom context, what would it mean to ensure justice for those who are poor? Compare Exodus 23:6.*

### Psalms 70

The psalmist cried out to God to come quickly and put to shame those who “delight in my hurt.” It can seem, at times, like there are those who do take joy in hurting others. Evil is a reality of human existence.

- *Where have you seen such evil that delights in the harm of persons? What, if anything, is done about it?*

The psalmist claimed to be poor and in need, and urged the Lord to act quickly on his behalf. Those who seek the Lord will not be disappointed.

- *How is the request of David a cry for justice from the Lord?*
- *Have you ever cried out for God to come quickly and to serve his righteous justice in your midst? What was that like for you?*

### 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

St. Paul taught the Thessalonians about the last day, when Jesus would come again in glory with the angels of heaven, and the dead would be raised to stand before him in judgment. Since many assumed Jesus’ return would happen in their lifetime, they had begun to worry about Christians who had already died and what their ultimate fate would be at Christ’s return. In order to clear up their misconceptions, Paul reiterated the promise of Christ.

- *In what ways does our “ignorance” about the things of God cause us anxiety and even fear? Why does that happen?*
- *In the midst of our fears, why is a promise from God often more powerful and necessary than an explanation?*

Verse 14 says, “God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (ESV). The Greek word *axei* — usually translated “will bring” — can also have more of the sense “will go and get” (literally, “will take into custody”).

- *How might the translation “go and get” better show the similarity between our resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus, where God “raised him up” days after his death?*

Many modern Christians believe in something called the Rapture — a human-invented teaching that says God will secretly take living believers up into heaven prior to the Resurrection on judgment day.

- *Why is it important to read this passage in the context of Paul answering a very specific question? How has this been used to create an entire theology based on the idea of Rapture?*
- *How is a secret, pre-resurrection Rapture specifically denied in this passage? According to verses 15–16, will the living be taken up into heaven prior to the dead being raised on the last day?*

### Matthew 25:1–13

Enthusiastic believers often warn us, “The end is near!” as their lives focus on being prepared for destruction. In a similar way, those who appear to take the return of Jesus most seriously are those who are certain the end is coming within our own lifetimes. Jesus turns this assumption around by telling a parable about ten virgins — some wise and some foolish — giving us some insight about what it really means to be ready for our Lord’s return.

- *Were the wise virgins those who assumed the bridegroom was coming immediately, or those who were prepared for a wait? In everyday life, how do you plan differently if you are anticipating a short wait as opposed to a long wait?*