

Day of Pentecost

May 19, 2024



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.

Without the Holy Spirit, hearts are either hardened in sins or they despair. But both are contrary to the will of God. By the Holy Spirit the godly navigate between this satanic Scylla and Charybdis and cast themselves upon the superabundant and innate mercy of God. They confess their sins, but at the same time they also confess the immeasurable mercy of God.

— Martin Luther —

Quoted in the Northwestern Lutheran (printed 1967)

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Because of Israel's idolatry and disobedience, many had been exiled to Babylon. Ezekiel was one who was also exiled and given a call from God to speak on the Lord's behalf during that difficult period away from home. His name means "God will prevail" or "God will strengthen," which indicates what God promised to do for Israel as he vowed to bring them back to their homeland in due time.

As a nation, Israel was spiritually dead. Given over to worshipping false gods, they were conquered by their enemies. These enemies took many of the best and brightest to the east to live in captivity. However, many people remained in Jerusalem — namely the ones who were not skilled tradespeople or those with education or affluence. This left Jerusalem bereft of leaders, floundering along without a clear mission or purpose. Those in Babylon had to begin anew in a strange land under the rule of foreign kings.

The vision God gave to Ezekiel reflected the condition of the severed community: dry, withered, brittle bones wasting away in a valley. God would miraculously bring his people back to life — breathing life into them, repairing tendons and ligaments, and covering the once-dessicated bone with skin.

- *What are the physical differences between healthy, strong bones and dry, brittle ones? In what ways does this image of renewed bones bring you hope in what God can do?*
- *God said to Ezekiel, "Prophesy to these bones!" How is God's proclaimed Word a Word that becomes reality? Where else have you seen this in Scripture?*

Psalms 139:1-12 (13-16)

Perhaps you've wondered a time or two whether or not God thinks about you personally. Maybe you've thought that you aren't important enough in your trials for God to even consider, or to give a passing thought about. Or, perhaps you've meditated on what God thinks of you, during silent prayer time or during the confession in worship. The psalmist, who pondered the very same questions, wrote this beautiful hymn that praised God for his omniscience. "You have searched me and known me," he said. Nothing escapes the view of God. God sees, examines, investigates, and lingers over every aspect of our person.

- *How does it make you feel to know that nothing escapes the view of God? Is it frightening? Is it comforting?*
- *Why is it easy for us to tell others how important they are to God and continue to doubt that fact for ourselves?*

Acts 2:1-21

The noise that flooded the place where the apostles gathered after the resurrection of Jesus was one that was deafening. It was like a roar of rushing wind. The Greek word used here for sound is transliterated as *ex-os*. This word is used only four times in the New Testament, including here in Acts 2:2. In Luke 4:37 it is rendered as "report," in Luke 21:25 it is "roar," and in Hebrews 12:19, "blast."

- *What is the loudest sound you've ever heard? Was it alarming to hear? In what ways was this sound not only a loud rush of noise but also a report that something important was happening?*

Luke tells us that the sound of the wind filled the whole house and all those who had differing native languages were able to understand each other in their own language. However, these people were gathered together in that house at the same time, and all were amazed at the level of understanding they had for one another as they praised God and glorified Jesus.

- *In what ways do we come to understand the most important parts of each other as we praise and glorify God? Does our worship change how we see our neighbor whom we might think is different from us?*

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

There are times in our lives when someone who loves us and wants the best for us has to tell us the cold, hard truth. We may not want to hear it, but it must be said for our own good. We may not be prepared to deal with the truth, but in time it will sink in: maybe when we've matured, or when we have no other choice but to listen.

Jesus said to his disciples prior to his crucifixion that he would be departing from them soon. Up to that point he had spent a great deal of time teaching them what they needed to know about life, faith, and the ways of God. As he prepared to leave, he revealed to them that there was more for them to learn but that they couldn't handle it quite yet. The Holy Spirit, Jesus promised, would give them the fullness of the Truth when they were ready to hear it. Jesus instructed the disciples about the role of the Holy Spirit. He explained that the Advocate would have two main purposes which were (and still are) a continuation of Jesus' work: to convict the world of sin and unbelief, and continue to reveal the truth about Jesus.

- *Why is the truth often so hard for us to hear? Why do we resist it or try to wiggle our way out of it?*