

The Holy Trinity

May 26, 2024



The Scriptures gradually and beautifully lead us to Christ; first revealing him to us as a man, then as the lord of all creatures, and finally as God. Thus we are successfully led to the true knowledge of God.

— Martin Luther —

Sermon for Trinity Sunday, Church Postil, 1522

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.

Isaiah 6:1–8

Israel had forsaken the Lord. The children were as corrupt as the parents. The offerings they made to the Lord were done in vain. They were criticized for their iniquity and false worship. Into the midst of Israel's disobedience and evil came a vision given to the prophet Isaiah by God. God put a call on Isaiah's life as he was shown the image of the Lord on his throne with seraphs next to him. As Isaiah faced this scene, he immediately proclaimed his sinfulness, saying, "For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ...".

- *In what ways did Isaiah identify with the sinfulness of Israel by these words?*

As the seraph touched Isaiah's lips with a hot coal, his words were cleansed and purified. Now all that he spoke would be holy and directed by God. He would no longer be unclean, but would be set apart for God's holy purposes.

- *How is the hot coal touching Isaiah's lips a sign of the prophetic office? In what ways is it important for God's people to be careful and intentional about what words come out of our mouths?*

Psalms 29

Doctors claim that newborn babies are able to recognize their mothers' voices immediately after birth. Humans have tremendous ability to recognize voices without seeing who is speaking as the sound waves reach the auditory and memory centers of the brain.

The psalmist recognized the voice of the Lord without ever having seen God, and perhaps without ever even having heard him audibly like we hear one another speak. The voice of the Lord is a voice that calls people to attention, and it accomplishes things, as well. God's voice has power over the creation that was brought into being by his very own words being spoken into chaos and darkness. His voice breaks cedars, hovers over the waters, and is full of majesty.

- *In what ways do we hear God's voice in our lives? (See 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 1 Kings 9:11–13 and John 10:27 for examples.) Is it difficult for you to know for sure that the voice you hear is coming from God and not from yourself or the enemy? How might you discern the true source of the voice when you think it might be from God?*
- *Martin Luther once said, "If I could hear God speaking in His own Person, I would run so fast to hear Him that my feet would bleed." How do you respond when you hear the voice of the Lord?*

Acts 2:14a, 22–36

Peter proclaimed to all who gathered around him post-Pentecost that all who called on the name of the Lord would be saved. This "calling on Christ's name" is what Luther explained concerning the First Commandment: "We should fear, love, and trust God above all things" (Luther's Small Catechism). Rather than call on the help of others to fill our needs, or to simply rely on ourselves, calling on Christ is to put God first in every aspect of our human existence.

- *When we call on the name of the Lord, how does it change our ultimate allegiances? Is calling on the Lord a work we do to gain God's favor, or something that grows out of a deeper conviction of faith?*

Peter's impassioned speech has a very specific purpose: conversion and the subsequent mission for those who believe. He put forth his own eyewitness account in this passage, as he recalled all that happened to Jesus while they were together. Peter also drew upon the prophecies of Joel, which pointed directly to Christ.

- *In what way(s) is Peter using Scripture that his audience would have been familiar with? Along with a plea for them to recall what they had first seen themselves, how is Peter trying to bring them to a defining faith?*
- *How do you suppose the Holy Spirit was active through Peter in this proclamation event?*

John 3:1–17

In the Gospel of John, the dichotomy of darkness versus light is a prominent theme. Darkness is equated with separation from God and his lack of knowledge of God and his ways, whereas light is the condition of being in the presence of God and following his will. As Nicodemus came to Jesus, he came under the cover of night.

- *How often do we struggle with our desire to follow Christ and our lack of belief or conviction to seek him openly and wholeheartedly? Does "seeking" always begin in the dark and move into the light?*

In John 3:19–20 (which is outside of the scope of this pericope), Jesus explained to Nicodemus that people have loved darkness rather than the light. Evil desires and sinful behavior are done in the dark so that the light will not expose them or their actions.

- *In what ways are the things we do in the light a defining characteristic of our personal identity in Christ? Conversely, is it the same for the things we do in darkness?*