

Pentecost 7 (Proper 9)

July 7, 2024



Humility is so tender and so precious that it cannot bear to look at its own face.

– Martin Luther –

Exposition on Luke 1:48

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.

Ezekiel 2:1-5

The prophet Ezekiel was one who spoke to the exiles while living among them, unlike Jeremiah who spoke to them from afar. The Lord called Ezekiel to attention saying, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” The Spirit of God then set the prophet on his feet and iterated the call on his life.

- *In what way did Ezekiel’s presence among the exiles make the Word he spoke powerful and authentic?*
- *How do we recognize when someone is paying attention to the message we are conveying? Does God always wait for us to come to attention on our own time?*

The phrase “son of man” occurs over 90 times in the book of Ezekiel, referring to the prophet as a mortal man. Jesus used this same term, drawing on Daniel 7, to refer to himself, adding a sense of Messianic grandeur (for example, Mark 2:10 and 2:28).

- *In what way is Jesus a mortal man like Ezekiel? In what way is Jesus much more than an ordinary man?*

Psalms 123

There are times in our lives when we go to a trusted friend or confidante and ask for help. Perhaps we simply want advice on a situation we are in, or an opinion on what we need to do. We can either decide to take our friend’s advice or choose to handle things the way we choose. We are free to take or leave advice when we seek the counsel of others.

Psalms 123 is a song where the psalmist asks for help in the midst of trial. The word “eyes” is used four times in this short hymn. In the midst of being mocked by their enemies, the psalmist speaks for the whole congregation singing, “Our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us” (123:2). To lift one’s eyes heavenward is to look to the source of life for salvation.

- *How might a person “look” to the Lord for help? When we seek God’s counsel, are we free to follow or not? What usually happens when we choose not to follow?*
- *Does it ever bother you if someone repeatedly comes to you for advice and it seems that they never actually take it? Do you think God feels that way about us at times? Why or why not?*

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

We often use a colloquialism that relates to what Paul is declaring in this passage about staying humble. We say,

“Don’t get too big for your britches!” Or, we might say that someone “keeps us humble” by reminding us gently that we are far from perfect.

Paul received many visions and signs from God that might have made a lesser person prone to boasting. He was determined not to be prideful about what God had given to him. He connected his suffering to humility. The Greek word he used for “conceit” here is *hyper-ay-roh-mai* — which means to be overly prideful in one’s own accomplishments. His message to the Christians in Corinth was that, even though God was using him (and them) for amazing things, it was not their doing, and all glory goes to God alone.

- *Have you ever struggled with pride when it comes to your ministry? How does God work to keep us humble? Does that humbling ever seem unfair to you?*

Mark 6:1-13

When we get offended sometimes we utter under our breath, “How dare you!” We question the person’s right to say or do the thing they did that caused us angst. In a way, we don’t recognize their authority and feel judged by their words.

Jesus’ authority comes from his divinity, but since those in his hometown failed to recognize his divine status, they failed to see the source of his works of healing, preaching, and interpretation of the Scriptures. It offended them, so much so that they were shocked and angry with the son of Mary and Joseph as he performed signs and wonders.

- *Why do you suppose the people in Jesus’ town were offended by the good works they say him do? Wouldn’t it be more appropriate to be offended by evil works rather than good works?*

After this exchange between the locals and Jesus, he sent his followers out, two by two, and granted them his own authority. He commanded them to take nothing with them, except a staff (a symbol of authority?). They would have to rely on God’s provision and their neighbors’ hospitality to do their work.

- *If people did not receive the disciples, what would that say about how they viewed their authority?*
- *When have you experienced resistance from people in your own “hometown?” Why are we prone to reject the authority of someone we have known our whole lives and more easily accept the word of a stranger?*
- *In what ways does our ministry depend on Jesus’ authority and not on our own? How do we discern Jesus’ authority in our churches?*