

Lent 1

March 9, 2025



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.

What kind of a temptation would it be, if we were not forsaken and stood not alone? ... [For] there I am in the true school, and I learn what I am, how weak my faith is, how great and rare true faith is, and how deeply unbelief is entrenched in the hearts of all men.

—Martin Luther—

Sermon on the Temptation of Jesus Christ

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

When Israel made it to the Promised Land, God instructed them to participate in two rituals: 1) The offering of the first fruits of the land in the first year they arrived; 2) A tenth of their harvest in the third year. The first ritual was an offering for the transition between being a nomadic people and the second was an offering that signified they were a settled community. In both cases they were giving back to God what God had first given to them. They were also making a confession of faith about what God had done for them as a people.

- To whom was the first offering to be given? What about the second offering? Why do you suppose there was a difference?
- In what way is the portion of what we give as offering in worship just a small part of what God has given to us first? Why is that important for us to recognize?

Psalms 91:1–13

Homelessness is a serious issue in the world today. To have a home is to be protected from the elements, have a place to feel safe and secure, and a place to rest peacefully without fear of being abused or attacked. One of our most basic human needs is shelter, and yet, there are many in the world who do not have the benefit of something this essential.

- In what ways do we often forget about those who are homeless and have nowhere to stay safe and comfortable? How can we discipline ourselves to be aware of the poor among us?

In this psalm the writer takes the need for a home to an even deeper level. He sings of God, the Most High, as his shelter. Just as a tree's shadow can cause great relief in the hot sun or in a drizzle of rain, here in the shadow of the Almighty, God provides us the truest shelter from the blows that daily life deals out.

- In what way does God's loving presence provide us a kind of spiritual shelter? Can you give any examples of times you have felt God "sheltering" you from trouble?
- In what sense are we all ultimately dependent upon God's protection? Why is it important to remember that the sheltering care of God extends beyond death itself?

Romans 10:8b–13

Many people of faith have a difficult time claiming the assurance of salvation, because we tend to think in terms of human works. When we look at our lives and judge

ourselves on the basis of what we think a Christian "ought" to look like, we know that we could never measure up to the standards that God expects of us.

- Have you ever met people who believed that "being saved" is something they accomplished for themselves? Why is this a false and dangerous conceit?
- How does this kind of boasting push Christ out of the picture of salvation?

Saint Paul made it clear: to be saved is not an acknowledgement of what we have done, but an acknowledgment of what God has done for us in Christ. "If you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that **God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved (v. 9)." Note that God is the actor in salvation!

- In what sense is faith not a confidence (2 Corinthians 3:4–6) in what we have done, but a confidence in what Christ has done for us? How does this understanding allow us to be bold in saying that we have been saved?

Luke 4:1–13

Think of a time when you encountered someone whose "walls were up" in an aggressive defensiveness. Perhaps it was a person who seemed to be waiting for you to say something they disagree with so they could pounce on you in argument. You can feel the tension in the air it seems.

- In what way is the source of the problem in such cases often a lack of trust? Why is trust so important in relationships?

As the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness right after his baptism in the Jordan river, the adversary began to test him by calling into question Jesus' trust in his Father. The enemy's goal was to get Jesus to "prove himself" by relying on his divinity to show that he really was the Son of God. But Jesus would not be tricked.

- How does Jesus' faithfulness in the face of temptation demonstrate his trust in God?
- Why is trying to "prove ourselves" one of the ways we often give in to the testing we experience? In what ways did Jesus here show that he had nothing to prove?

Jesus saw the devil's challenge for what it was: a trap. "You shall not put the Lord to the test," he said.

- In what way was the devil himself failing the very test that he was putting before Jesus?
- How did Jesus experience continual testing in his ministry? How have you experienced testing in your ministry?