Sola Lectionary Text Study

Vigil of Easter

March 27, 2027 (Year B)

"The great longing and love of the women for the Lord must also be particularly noted here, so that unadvised and alone they go early to the grave, not thinking of the great stone which was rolled before the tomb."

– Martin Luther –
Church Postils

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.

Daniel 6:1-24

King Darius of Babylon appointed numerous leaders to authority over his kingdom. Daniel, though he was an Israelite, was one of the king's closest advisors. The newly appointed officials saw that King Darius favored Daniel and was apt to put him into a distinguished position of leadership. So that it wouldn't happen, the new leaders called "satraps" devised a plan to find fault with Daniel. Since Daniel was blameless they devised a plan that would surely trap Daniel – they created a law that forbade worshipping any god other than the King. The law was signed and went into effect. Daniel went home and prayed three times a day per usual, giving thanks to God. The men watched for just such an action and they reported the infraction to King Darius who was caught by his own law and was therefore forced to punish Daniel.

- *Why did Daniel continue his practice of prayer to the Lord God of Israel even though he knew it was against the law?*
- *How did King Darius react when he heard the bad news about Daniel? Why didn't he just revoke the law and save Daniel?*
- *How did God use this situation to show his power? What was the effect on those in the king's court?*

Psalm 16

The words of the Psalmist could conceivably reflect the thoughts of Daniel who was ever-faithful to the Lord. "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. THe lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed I have a beautiful inheritance." Daniel trusted, as did King David, that the Lord would provide for all his needs and even if something terrible should happen, trusting the Lord was still the only possibility for both men.

- *In what ways has God granted you his goodness in times of plenty and in times of need? Did you recognize it at the time or was it much later that you saw his mercy?*
- *The psalmist said, "I have no good apart from you." Why is this so hard for many to understand? Where do people look for "good" for themselves apart from God? How does that usually turn out?*

1 Peter 4:1-8

Peter spoke to those who would listen about the power of Christian love in the lives of all people. The offering of forgiveness and mercy can and often does change people. In this way Christians can effect change by the power of God's Holy Spirit – "love covers a mulititude of sins."

- *Have you ever experienced the gift of forgiveness for something that weighed you down with guilt and shame? How did it change you? How did it help you to be more graceful toward others?*

Jesus' physical suffering overcame the power of sin in the lives of believers. When we, as his disciples, suffer for the sake of Christ, Peter suggests that sin is overcome in the believer.

- *How is this something we do not do for ourselves but rather something that Christ does for us? Who is the only one that can conquer sin?*

Matthew 27:57-66

Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate at the death of Jesus and asked for his body. His noble intervention meant that Jesus would not be placed in a criminal's grave with others who had been executed. He took great care to prepare his Lord's body by cleaning it and wrapping it in linen as one would do for someone they loved. Then he shut the tomb's entrance by rolling a stone in front of the opening of the grave.

- *Matthew makes it clear that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus. How did his action to care for the Lord's physical body exhibit his commitment to his teacher?*
- *Mary and Mary were there to watch this formal burial of Jesus. What do you suppose they were thinking as they observed the moment? Why does Matthew make sure tell his audience that there were witnesses to the burial?*

The next day as Pilate met with the chief priests and Pharisees, the religious leaders insisted that the tomb of Jesus would be made secure. (For an interesting article on the shape of the stone – round or corkshaped – see biblicalarchaeology.org and search "How Was Jesus' Tomb Sealed?") Pilate granted soldiers to stand guard in front of the tomb.

- *What was the main concern of the chief priests and Pharisess concerning Jesus' tomb? How would a missing body be interpreted, according to the detractors, by Jesus' disciples? What was the danger in that?*

There is a common thread that runs between the story of Daniel being placed in the lion's den and Jesus' body being placed in the tomb. The commonality is the "sealing" of the den/tomb.

- *In both cases, what did God do to the men inside the den/tomb?*

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