



Repentance is begun when we acknowledge our sins and are sincerely sorry for them; it is completed when trust in the mercy of God comes to this sorrow and hearts are converted to God and long for the forgiveness of sins.

– Martin Luther–

Exposition on Hebrews 14:3

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 34:11–24

Israel's leaders had failed miserably at shepherding the people. Now in exile far from home, the Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel who had also lost all faith in the leaders. God announced to the people that he will take over as Shepherd of his people since the leaders had taken such ill care of the them. Not only that, but the sheep had not taken good care of each other – and they would be divided between fat (wealthy) sheep and lean (poor) sheep who have had to scrounge for leftovers in the “pasture.”

- *As people of faith, how does this passage remind us of our inherent responsibility to care for one another?*
- *Are leaders held to an even higher standard? If so, why is that?*

The role of shepherd that is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament (Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Jeremiah 23:3) will be given back to the Davidic line of the people of Israel. This Shepherd will be the Messiah who will come to save God's people. He will know his own and his own will know him (John 10:14).

- *What does it mean to you that you have a shepherd who cares for your every need? Does it help you to live life more fully in any way?*

Psalms 119:169–176

The psalmist declared that he had gone astray from the Lord like a lost sheep. Even so, he desired God's continued commitment to rescue him and save him from sin and death. He asked for help from the Lord, acknowledging God's wisdom and the importance of keeping his commandments.

- *How does “being lost” help us to understand the delight of being found by God? Is that something we can understand if we have never been lost (or never realized that we were indeed lost)?*

The psalmist used the Hebrew word *ta-yah*, meaning wander, to describe how he strayed from the Lord's presence and protection. To go astray in this way means to pursue false ideals or commit wrong behaviors. Recognizing that he wandered away from the Lord, the psalmist asks for restoration to a right relationship with God. By saying, “I have chosen your precepts,” we can hear a turning around on the psalmist's part – a turning back to the Lord whose law is a delight to him.

- *Have you ever experienced a turning back to God in your own life? What was that like for you?*

1 Timothy 1:(5–11) 12–17

Paul wrote to young Timothy discussing how the law is to be used “lawfully” for the unjust and disobedient sinner, of which Paul called himself the “foremost.” There were some who made vain attempts to be teachers of this law but they didn't understand fully what they were saying even as they said it. Paul went on to say that Christ granted him mercy in regard to his violent persecutions of the church because he had acted in ignorance, not understanding the truth of who Jesus was and what he came to accomplish. This gave Jesus the opportunity to show great patience with Paul so that through his life others might see the love of Christ and come to believe.

- *What is the ultimate goal of instruction? How did the teachers Paul spoke about go against this most basic goal?*
- *How does Jesus' patience with Paul afford an opportunity for unbelievers to come to faith?*
- *When have you experienced Christ's patience with you?*

Luke 15:1–10

Luke describes here a major complaint that the Pharisees and other religious leaders had against Jesus: He welcomed sinners and tax collectors to join him in table fellowship, which was strictly against Jewish purity laws. But Jesus was more concerned about bringing people into a relationship with himself, than he was about obeying the law of Moses.

- *What is so important about people gathering together around food? What happens in those sorts of events that is so meaningful?*

Jesus told those gathered around him, especially those who were against him, stories about the lost and found. A shepherd had 100 sheep but one got lost. That shepherd left behind the 99 to go in search of the one lost sheep.

- *Why is the parable of the lost sheep such an extraordinary story? Would it even make sense for a shepherd to do what the shepherd in the story did? Why or why not?*

Jesus went on to tell a story of a woman who had ten coins but lost one in her house. She lit a lamp and searched until she found that coin.

- *How do these parables demonstrate the single-minded care of God? How does that make you feel as one of his children?*
- *Who are the people in this world, or in your neighborhood, who need to hear the good news of God's tenacity for finding the lost?*