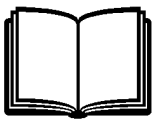
Sola Lectionary Text Study

Easter 7

May 29, 2022



"If you love God," says Augustine, "you are God; if you love the earth, you are earth." For love is a unifying power that turns into one the lover and his love.

–Martin Luther–

Lectures on Romans

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.

Acts 1:12-26

The disciples gathered back in that upper room where previously (?) they has eaten the Passover meal together with Jesus while he was still with them. Luke said that they were "of one accord." They were all thinking the same way. They knew what they had to do; they had to replace Judas who betrayed Jesus and took his own life in shame.

- *Do you think Judas deserves the reputation he has been branded with over the last two thousand years? Why or why not?*
- *Do you suppose Jesus would have forgiven Judas if he had stuck around until Sunday to see that his friend was alive? What evidence makes you answer the way you do?*
- *Does this passage inform or disinform your views on suicide? How or why?*

Psalm 133

This psalm is one of the few places in scripture that describe the blessings of the faith community. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) dwell in unity!" The Christian church seems to have many conversations about conflict and the resolution of that conflict, but it also seems that there are much fewer conversations about the joys of being a part of a faith community. Perhaps we have become too critical of one another and fail to see the goodness of being together as a group of believers. Perhaps we prefer to point out the negatives rather than highlight the positives. The psalmist describes the faith family as being like fine oil that runs down the face and soaks the collar of one's garment. If you imagine that oil to be something like frankincense or myrrh, then you can almost smell the healing power of that oil. If you aren't sure what those smell like, think of the calming scents of eucalyptus or lavender. Being brothers and sisters in Christ is a gift we have been given by the Lord, one to each other; to care for, honor, look after, and assist. There is no place quite like it on earth.

- *What do you experience as the great joys of the faith community? When you speak about your congregation to others, how do describe the people? Is it positive or negative?*

Revelation 22:1-6 (7-11) 12-20

When you think of the Garden of Eden, what image comes to mind? Do you see the most beautiful gardens you have ever visited and adjust it to be more extraordinary from there? In the last vision that John received from the angel, he saw a restored paradise with the tree of life in the center. That same tree that was in Eden, is now seen as a symbol of new life and salvation in John's vision. The river that flowed through Eden is part of the scene as well. It is sparkling like crystal, feeding the tree of life with its waters. This tree has leaves that provide healing to the nations and in this place there will be light forevermore.

- *Can you imagine such a pristine, holy place as is described in these verses? What is the purpose of relating this vision to John's readers? What hope and peace does it provide for you?*

The Word of the Lord comes to John saying that Christ will return soon and "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev. 22:7)

- *What is the promise the angel reveals to John? Why does it seem to be both coming quickly and in the distant future?*
- *In what ways are believers meant to keep the words of the prophecy?*

John 17:20-26

Jesus prayed to the Father in what is known as the "high priestly prayer," that his followers would be one. Our unity in Christ is meant to be a sign to the world of the unity between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The very place we find the Father and the Spirit is in the Son. To look for God elsewhere is to miss God completely.

- *How do those who don't know Christ, miss finding him because of the failure of unity within the church of Christ?*

Jesus, in his prayer to the Father, stated that he will give his followers the glory that was his so that the world may know of the relationship between Father and Son. The love that the Father gave to the Son is the same love that Jesus has showered upon his followers. Those who follow Jesus are called to this same kind of love that unifies and glorifies our Father in heaven. But on our own, we are incapable of this sort of love. We rely fully on Christ to give us that love so that it may be extended to others, thereby making his name known in all the earth.

- *In what instances in your own life have you recognized that you cannot love others the way Christ does, on your own? That you need him to do that for you?*
- *Reflect on what Jesus says in his prayer about the purpose of this love he shares. In what ways do we fail to reveal Christ to the world simply because we are separated, one from another?*

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