



It is, however, a matter of great moment, and utterly necessary, that to new-born and infant Christians, sincere and uncorrupt milk should be given. This milk is nothing else than the Gospel itself.

– Martin Luther –

Comments on 1 Peter 2:2

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 6:1–9, 7:a, 51–60

Last week, our reading from Acts showed us a picture of a nearly perfect early Church, but today's reading shows us how quickly things became troubled. Luke described two distinct groups in the church: the Hellenists and the Hebrews. The Hellenists were probably Greek-speaking Jews from outside of Judea, while the Hebrews were speakers of Aramaic. This basic distinction of geography and language resulted in a bit of conflict in the community. The food, which was so generously being held in common in chapter 2, is now not being distributed fairly between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. The focus has shifted from a desire to be generous to a concern with making sure one gets one's due.

- *Does this seem like a legitimate thing for the Hellenists to be concerned about? What are some ways the church continues to have these types of concerns?*

Spending very little time on the specifics of the distribution of food, Luke focused instead on the systems of authority and responsibility that were taking shape in the church. The twelve, who were tasked with preaching and teaching, do not see food distribution as part of their job description. Instead, they appointed seven others to take on this responsibility. The organization of the church was starting to take shape.

- *How does this decision about varying roles and responsibilities continue to shape the church today? Does it mean that there are roles of greater and lesser importance?*
- *How can conflicts like the one described here tear churches apart? What is the aim of effective, faithful leadership in the midst of such conflict?*

Our reading shifts gears to the dramatic story of Stephen, one of the first deacons. His bold, impassioned response to the charges brought against him only further inflame his opponents, finally resulting in his death. To the end, Stephen remains steadfast in faith, trusting in God's power to redeem, even calling upon God to forgive those who are killing him.

- *What do Stephen's words and actions suggest about his faith? What kind of example is he for us? What is our responsibility to brothers and sisters in the faith who suffer for their witness?*
- *How does Stephen's vision of heaven remind us of who, finally, will be recognized as Lord of all?*

Psalm 146

The psalmist reminds the people that princes and rulers

cannot save them. Only the Lord can save. There is no salvation in princes or presidents. When they die their plans die with them. Our hope is in the God of Jacob, the creator of all that is, the one is faithful forever.

- *How do we often get caught putting undue trust in political leaders? Is that fair to them? What does it take to snap us out of our dependence upon rulers for salvation?*

1 Peter 2:2–10

Milk is like a miracle substance God made for mammals to give to their offspring! Strong bones, healthy teeth, protein, muscle repair, and a great source of calcium and potassium. Peter surely didn't know all of that when he called the Gospel, "spiritual milk." The Holy Scriptures are a source of spiritual sustenance for us who follow Christ and desire to become more mature in the faith. Peter draws on Psalm 34:8 urging those who have tasted that the Lord is good to seek spiritual milk. The Lord feeds us on his holy Word and makes us stronger for our life in him.

- *Peter calls the spiritual milk of the Gospel unadulterated or pure. How is the Good News of Jesus Christ pure sustenance for you?*

John 14:1–14

Jesus has just finished telling the disciples that they would all forsake him and he would die. He had a rather harsh word with Peter in particular. It had been a difficult evening. Then he tells them not to let their hearts be troubled. It's a rather jarring transition. "You will deny me three times Do not let your hearts be troubled." It's hard to see how they could be anything but troubled.

Jesus' words to his disciples point to the reality that there is something happening here that is beyond their understanding. As far as they can see, everything is falling apart. All of their hopes and dreams of what following Jesus would mean are crumbling around them as he tells them what is actually going to happen. But Jesus knows that their abandonment, their rejection, and their faithlessness are not going to be the end of the story. There is more going on than meets the eye.

- *How do you think the disciples received Jesus' encouragement not to be troubled? Do you think his words would have sounded reasonable to them after all that he had just told them?*
- *What is Jesus' explanation to his disciples why they need not be troubled? How is knowing that Jesus has prepared a place for us a comfort in this life? What freedom does that give us?*