bring Christ down because the word is near us (Rom 10:5–17). Here God’s transcendence functions as law because it means we are powerless to reach him. This dilemma is answered by the word of faith that we proclaim. The gospel reading (Mt 14:22–33) has Jesus’s miraculous power functioning first to terrify the disciples when they think he is a ghost and then to comfort them when he announces, “Take heart, it is I.”

No matter which course the preacher settles upon, he should give thought to how he will evoke the wonder he intends. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, “Don’t tell us God’s creation is wonderful; describe it so that we say it is wonderful.”

David R. Maxwell

Endnotes


2 For example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaGEjrADGPA.

3 This is an adaptation of a point Lewis makes in a letter to Joan Lancaster in June of 1956. To see the entire letter, go to http://www.lettersofnote.com/2012/04/c-s-lewis-on-writing.html.

Editor’s note: The following homiletical help is adapted from Concordia Journal, July 1999.

Proper 15 • Isaiah 56:1, 6–8 • August 17, 2014

Salvation Is for All

I. Introduction

A. Most people detest any form of discrimination or exclusionary activity. It is no fun being left out of the group or not being invited to the birthday or graduation party, as well as to the wedding of a best friend. And usually, there is a price, financial or otherwise, to be paid if you want to be part of a club or organization. Being left out of the inner circle results in depression and the real sense that no one cares or appreciates you for who you are. Aloneness is no fun!

B. God’s word in Isaiah assures you that as God’s chosen people you are not left out. He does not discriminate or exclude anyone, regardless of race, (previous) creed, or ethnic background. God seeks and rescues even foreigners and outcasts. Salvation is for all.

II. Salvation is God’s work.

A. God brings salvation (v. 1).

1. It is what he did for his chosen people.

2. It is what he accomplished in Christ for all nations.

B. The Christian responds to God’s work of the salvation that is revealed (v. 1).
III. Salvation is for all (v. 8).
   A. Identifying marks of those whom God has bound to himself from all nations through his gospel (vv. 6–7).
      1. They serve God.
      2. They love the Lord’s name.
      3. They keep the Sabbath (hear God’s word).
      4. They hold fast to the covenant.
   B. Identifying marks of the God who binds all people to himself in Christ.
      1. He sends glad tidings to captives (Is 52).
      2. He provides a lamb to be slaughtered for transgressions (Is. 53).
      3. By his baptism we are buried with Christ and made alive in him (Rom 6:4).

IV. Conclusion

   Salvation by grace through faith is for all. Unfortunately, many people live on the dark side of life, rejecting the gift of salvation. They are bound to themselves and therefore prefer to save themselves. Those whom the Lord has bound to himself through the waters of baptism, establishing the Christian’s identity, serve him and love the name that is above every name—Jesus Christ. By faith, they hold to his covenant and receive the joy of their salvation.

Robert W. Weise

Proper 16 • Isaiah 51:1–6 • August 24, 2014

This passage is about the end times in which the gospel is not only present (as it is in all such readings) but in which it predominates. Not only does the gospel occupy more space in this reading than is customary, but the overall impression conveyed is a bright and positive one—despite the stark reminder of verse 6 that the heavens and earth will perish and its inhabitants “die in like manner” (“die like gnats” [RSV]; “die like flies” [NIV]). Some reasons for this impression follow.

Twice the text points out the triumph of “righteousness” (v. 5a and v. 6b). The text initiates its discussion of “righteousness” in the opening verse, where it speaks of people “pursuing righteousness.” This may cause us to think of people “hungering and thirsting” for righteousness in the ethical or behavioral sense, of hoping for a world in which evil vanishes and good prevails, of a world in which everything turns out all right at the end. This view finds support immediately following the text, verse 7, which addresses people “who know what is right” and have God’s law in their hearts.

But the “righteousness” the text talks about means more. The RSV translates the word for “righteousness” as “deliverance.” As we know from numerous Bible passages,