

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Malachi 4:1-6). This is about The Judgment. There is not a pretty picture of what will happen to those who have resisted God's grace. But for believers this is a time when their bodies will be totally healed and be energetic *like calves released from the stall* (v. 2). The reference to Elijah in verse 5 might well suggest how John the Baptist prepared the people for Jesus. Both John and Jesus have come with the saving message and there is no excuse to not believe in Christ as the Savior of the world.

Epistle (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13). Paul now turns to his last topic for the Thessalonians and that is idleness. He had spoken to them about it before in his first letter to them. Apparently his warning had not been heeded. In this reading Paul points to how idleness is really a sin against God and a bad witness to their Christian community. He gives them an example from his own life of asking no support from them for the ministry he was providing which he certainly was owed.

Gospel (Luke 21:5-28). Here Jesus is speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. As the disciples adore the beauty of the temple Jesus tells them that this same temple will be destroyed. (21:5-6). Jesus will conclude the first part of His end-times discourse by returning to the theme of destruction, but Jerusalem will be the focus (21:20-24). Jesus will later also address the end of the world happening (21:25-36).

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Malachi 4:1-6

Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. ² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. ³ Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. ⁵ “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

4:2 sun of righteousness. God and his glory are compared with the sun in Isa 60:1, 19. Christ is the “rising sun” from heaven. (CSB)

In contrast to the burning fire of judgment, the heat of the sun warms believers with the healing message of God's righteousness in Christ (cf Is 58:8).

4:2 its wings. Wings were often a symbol of security and shelter (Ps 63:7; 91:4; Lk 13:34). The handles of royal Judean storage jars were impressed with a winged sun disk. (TLSB)

4:4 Remember the law. This is the word “Torah.” It comes from the verb meaning “to teach or to instruct.” Here it does not mean just the laws with do's and don't but also and especially the words of promise and instruction, the complete revelation of God to His people. We are saved through this revelation of God's will. (PBC)

4:6 turn the hearts. The angel Gabriel used these words to describe John's mission. When fathers and children have a good relationship, the way is prepared for the coming of Christ into their hearts. (TLSB)

4:6 *curse*. Though God threatened utter destruction, His ultimate hope is that people will respond in repentance and faith to the message of prophets such as Malachi and John (Lk 3:3–14). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

⁶In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” ¹¹We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. ¹³And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

3:6 *idle*. Neglecting daily responsibilities and common tasks, but also meddling in the affairs of others. Perhaps this was because they anticipated that the end of the world was imminent (2:1–3), or perhaps they were simply lazy and arrogant (cf v 11). (TLSB)

3:8 *eat ... food*. A Hebraism for “make a living.” Paul is not saying that he never accepted hospitality but that he had not depended on other people for his living. (CSB)

3:10 *anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat*. Called “the Golden Rule of work.” Related to both the general and specific instructions already given orally and in writing, especially the command given in v 6. (TLSB)

3:12 *quietly*. Without interfering in the work of others and without arrogantly seeking to draw attention (cf vv 6, 11). (TLSB)

3:13 *never tire...doing what is right*. In warning against idleness, Paul hopes his readers will never tire of doing what is right. If we’re going to be busy, he’s saying, be busy with the right. (LL)

GOSPEL – Luke 21:5-28

⁵Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶“As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” ⁷“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?” ⁸He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. ⁹When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.” ¹⁰Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. ¹²“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. ¹³This will result in your being witnesses to them. ¹⁴But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. ¹⁵For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷All men will hate you because of me. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By standing firm you will gain life. ²⁰“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²²For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that

has been written. ²³ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. ²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

21:5 how the temple was adorned. One stone at the southwest corner was some 36 feet long. “Whatever was not overlaid with gold was purest white” (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.6.). Herod gave a golden vine for one of its decorations. Its grape clusters were as tall as a man. The full magnificence of the temple as elaborated and adorned by Herod has only recently come to light through archaeological investigations on the temple hill. (CSB)

21:6 not one stone ... left. Fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans took Jerusalem and burned the temple. (CSB)

Devastation would be complete; no part of the temple remains today, only a retaining wall of the outer court (the West Wall). (TLSB)

21:9 do not be frightened. (KJV “terrified”) The word comes from the verb “to fall” and implies anything that would make you uncertain in your steps. Colloquially, this person would be “knock-kneed” or “shaking in his boots” from fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

21:11 signs from heaven. Jesus speaks of natural disasters and physical disturbances. The historian Josephus reported such events before the destruction of the temple. (TLSB)

21:12 before all this. Before Jerusalem’s fall, the disciples will have to endure various persecutions because they are Christians (1Pt 4:12). (TLSB)

21:17 all men. Hyperbole, an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis (Ac 2:47; 3:9), but strongly emphasizing that Jesus’ followers will experience persecution. (TLSB)

21:18 not a hair of your head will perish. In view of v. 16 this cannot refer to physical safety. The figure indicates that there will be no real, i.e., spiritual, loss. (CSB)

21:21 flee to the mountains. When an army surrounds a city, it is natural to seek protection inside the walls, but Jesus directs his followers to seek the safety of the mountains because the city was doomed to destruction. (CSB)

21:23 pregnant women. Parents will face additional tragedy. (TLSB)

21:24 they will be taken. First-century historian Flavius Josephus states that more than a million died and 97,000 were carried away captive. (TLSB)

21:24 times of the Gentiles. Period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem. Still today, large portions of the city are inhabited by people of non-Jewish descent. (TLSB)

21:25 signs. Cosmic events (eclipses, comets) and earthly events (storms, tidal waves) prepare for the ultimate catastrophe; creation itself is torn apart. (TLSB)