

Notes for Next Sunday

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29). The grumbling begins only three days into the journey. Perhaps aching muscles or sore feet cause their discomfort. God provides guidance to the Promised Land and manna to eat on the way; in return for His love, He receives grumbling. Sometimes, obeying God causes pain and suffering. When tempted to grumble, think of Christ at Gethsemane and how He turned His pains into prayers. Earlier, we learned of Moses' helplessness as Israel's leader—one man amid a throng of rebellious people. Mercifully, God grants 70 elders to help Moses.

Epistle (James 5:13-20). James has been calling sinners to repentance, and here he exhorts the entire congregation to do the same. No aspect of our lives is private, only between "me and God." We hide behind facades of perfection, but sin and its consequences pervade every aspect of our lives. Left on our own, we would perish. But our Lord has given us a community of fellow saints to hear our confession, pray for our needs, and restore us when we err. We hear His Gospel from them. God continuously sends into our lives those who pray for us, sing praise with us, and speak God's words of forgiveness to us. As His people, healed in body and soul, we may approach His throne of grace with confidence.

Gospel (Mark 9:38-50). This Gospel's thrust is related, but it is not identical. In vv 30–37 Jesus warns against trying to become great the way the world does. In this Sunday's text, he is concerned about the pride that moves his followers to condemn—and potentially exclude—others, while they go easy on themselves. Jesus points out that it actually ought to be the other way around. They should be grateful for what God does in them and in others. At the same time, they need to discipline themselves, realizing that the way they live today has eternal consequences. The disciples' conduct is to reflect that Jesus is their Redeemer.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Numbers 11:4-6,10-16, 24-29

⁴The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. ⁶But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" ¹⁰Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. ¹¹He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? ¹³Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin." ¹⁶The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. ²⁴So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. ²⁶However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷A young man ran and

told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”²⁸ Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses’ aide since youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!”²⁹ But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

11:4 rabble. An apt term for the non-Israelite mixed group of people who followed the Israelites out of Egypt, pointing to a recurring source of complaints and trouble in the camp. Those who did not know the Lord and his mercies incited those who did know him to rebel against him. (CSB)

11:5 fish ... cucumbers ... garlic. A variety they knew about but probably which they did not have very often when they were in Egypt. This is some more of the thankless theme.

11:10 The LORD became exceedingly angry. The rejection of his gracious gift of heavenly food angered the Lord. God had said that the reception of the manna by the people would be a significant test of their obedience.

11:10 Moses was troubled. The people’s reaction to God’s provision of manna was troubling to Moses as well. Instead of asking the Lord to understand the substance of their complaint, Moses asked him why he was given such an ungrateful people to lead. (CSB)

11:12 Did I conceive all these people? The implication is that the Lord conceived the people of Israel, that he was their nurse and that their promises were his. Moses asks that he be relieved of his mediatorial office, for “the burden is too heavy for me.” Even death, Moses asserts (v. 15), would be preferable to facing the continuing complaints of the people. (CSB)

11:16 bring me seventy of Israel’s elders. The Lord came to the aid of His weak and distraught servant, giving Moses a twofold solution to his problem. Moses’s task of administration was lightened by the appointment of 70 elders of Israel who were to “bear the burden of the people” with him (v. 17). By a supply of meat, the Lord also removed the immediate cause of Israel’s irritating weeping. (TLSB)

11:25 they prophesied. The extraordinary manifestation of divine power took place only to validate the authority of the 70 elders. When they left the tent, this miraculous gift was no longer available to them. (TLSB)

11:28 Joshua...stop them. Joshua feared that Eldad and Medad were assuming authority in competition with Moses. However, Moses assured him that the Lord gives His Spirit under various conditions for the same purpose. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – James 5:13-20

¹³ Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. ¹⁹ My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

5:14 oil. Anointing is a physical sign accompanying the prayer much like incense is Levitical worship. In the ancient world, oil was used for medicinal purposes. Here it is placed on the person while praying, marking that person as one set apart for God’s care. A similar practice is described in Mk. 6:13. The

anointing oil in Ex. 30:22-31 had a similar function, marking certain items as holy, dedicated to God. (TLSB)

5:15 raise him up. Make him better physically, but also with a view toward the ultimate goal of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. So in Ac 3:1–4:22, Peter raised up the lame man and announced that by the name of Jesus “whom God raised from the dead” (3:15; 4:10) the man was healed. (TLSB)

5:16 confess your sins to one another. “Here the reference is not to confession made to priests, but is the reconciliation of brothers to each other. (TLSB)

5:16 righteous person. One who is righteous by faith; same as one who prays “in faith.” (TLSB)

5:19 brings him back. Implies seeking out one who has wandered, in order to restore him through confession and forgiveness. (TLSB)

5:20 cover over a multitude of sins. More than we can number; God forgives all our sins. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 9:38-50

³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” ³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. ⁴² “And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

9:39 Do not stop him. “Stop preventing him” likely indicates that the man is still doing so. “In the next moment” is “in the same breath.” “Say anything bad” or “speak evil” means “he believes in Me.” (Buls)

9:41 gives you a cup of water. Smallest kindness of God could be as simple as giving a cup of water. Even a small generous act gives glory to Christ. (v. 37). (TLSB)

9:42 one of these little ones who believe in me. † Perhaps the little children mentioned in vv. 36–37. Jesus’ point is clear: To cause even those whom we might consider to be the least of believers to sin will bring serious judgment. (CSB)

9:43 cut it off. Hyperbole, a figure of speech that exaggerates to make its point, is used here to emphasize the need for drastic action. Often sin can be conquered only by radical “spiritual surgery.” (CSB)

9:48 their worm does not die. “Their” is the damned in hell. Hell is pictured as everlasting internal corruption and putrefaction and external torture. (Buls)

9:50 have salt in yourselves. Next follows a rhetorical question, a good teaching device. Without salt there can be no seasoning. Without the Word and Spirit there can be no forgiveness, no battle against sin, no everlasting life. By the way, this sentence does away with the idea: “Once in grace, always in grace.” (Buls)