

Notes for Next Sunday

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Jeremiah 11:18-20). The Lord reveals to Jeremiah that his own townspeople of Anathoth are plotting to kill him. It is not surprising that rebels conspiring to dethrone God should also seek to silence His messenger. Jeremiah does not desire personal revenge; he would have given his life to save his people. Nevertheless, as God's spokesman, his cause is also God's cause. Those who tell him not to prophesy are in effect telling God He has no right to impose His will on them.

Epistle (James 3:13-4:10). The chapter 3 portion of this text we find that there are only two ways to live: by the "wisdom" of the world or by God's wisdom. James condemns the worldly pattern of selfishness, deception, hurtful words, and other evil behaviors. Christians, too, struggle with such sins and are even tempted to present themselves as holier than others. How different is the wisdom of God! He has purified us in Christ and freed us from the stain of the world. We now walk in the works He has prepared for us to do. In the chapter 4 portion of this text James is using the language of the Prophets, James teaches that rejecting God's ways is spiritual adultery. It is seeking something other than the faithful God who loves us. God's people of every generation have been unfaithful to Him. James does not call us to turn to ourselves and do more works to be forgiven but instead calls us to return to the Lord in repentance.

Gospel (Mark 9:30-37). This text tells how Jesus provided the Twelve with special training as they traveled around Galilee. At the Transfiguration three of them saw Jesus' unveiled glory. Less than a year remains before Good Friday and Easter. The Lord's thoughts are already fastened on the suffering that awaits him, while the disciples focus on status and competition. Jesus intends, by his impending Passion and the value of humble service, to turn around their thinking about what matters and what does not.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 11:18-20

¹⁸ Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. ¹⁹ I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more." ²⁰ But, O LORD Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.

11:18 their ... they. Jeremiah's personal enemies, the "men of Anathoth," his hometown. (CSB)

11:19 lamb led to the slaughter. This type of lamb was tame because it had been raised in an environment without fear. That made it all the more vulnerable. This reflects Isaiah 53:7 and how Jesus was to and did die. Those who follow Jesus should come to expect the same treatment. (QV)

11:19 destroy the tree and its fruit. This was a good way to totally get rid of someone. If you don't like what someone is saying then kill him and his speech will stop. People also do that to rulers whose governance they don't like. Chapter 12:2 however, tells us that what God plants no one can destroy. (PBC)

11:19 be remembered no more. His name would die out. This was a very bad thing and to be avoided at all costs.

11:20 *to you have I committed my cause.* This call was not for personal satisfaction, but to announce that those who stand against the Lord's Word cannot prosper or escape His judgment. Such vengeance would also serve as a warning to any others who might want to resist or threaten the prophet. (PBC)

EPISTLE – James 3:13-4:10

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

3:13 meekness of wisdom. Both are attributes of a righteous person. (TLSB)

3:14 jealousy and selfish ambition. Sins frequently singled out in the NT, for they destroy the community created by God. (TLSB)

3:15 earthly, unspiritual, demonic. Sin is not from God but from the world, which is controlled by evil. (TLSB)

3:16 selfish ambition. Just as the small tongue can start a great fire, so desire leads to sin that can destroy the self and others. (TLSB)

3:17 then. Good works flow from a heart that has been purified by Christ. The traits listed enable us to build others up. All contrast with cursing and boasting. (TLSB)

3:18 harvest of righteousness. Bounty of righteous actions. The list in v 17 is only representative; there is no limit to the benefits others receive from our righteous actions. (TLSB)

4:1 desires. Desires, such as jealousy and ambition, that give sinful pleasure. (TLSB)

4:2 you do not ask. Asking for the things that God has promised to give is key, as in Jas 1:5–8, where asking God for wisdom is encouraged. (TLSB)

4:3 you ask wrongly. Not that the wrong words are used but that the motive is selfish, seeking only worldly treasures. Instead of selfish prayer, intercessory prayer for others is encouraged. James is not

developing a complete theology of prayer but demonstrating that people without wisdom from God cannot pray properly. (TLSB)

4:4 adulterous people. Echoes Yahweh's condemnation of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness. God made us His Bride through faith in Christ; rejecting Him for the world's ways is adultery. (TLSB)

4:5 Scripture. May be translated "Do you suppose that the Scripture speaks uselessly? Does the spirit that He causes to dwell in us crave jealously?" (TLSB)

4:7 submit yourselves then To place oneself under God's authority, which is shown most powerfully when He forgives. Parallels "Humble yourselves" in v 10. How submission and humbling takes place is described in vv 7–10. The language of these verses strongly echoes OT calls to repentance. (TLSB)

4:7 Resist the devil. Parallels "Draw near to God" in v 8 and refers back to the evil wisdom of 3:15. Resisting the devil is, therefore, the same as turning to God in repentant prayer. (TLSB)

4:10 exalt you. After repentance comes God's forgiveness, new life, and ultimately the crown of life. Jesus teaches that those who humble themselves before God will be exalted. (TLSB)

GOSPEL Mark 9:30-37

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. ³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." ³⁶ He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

9:30 passed through Galilee. Jesus' public ministry in and around Galilee was complete, and he was now on his way to Jerusalem to suffer and die. As he had been doing for several months, Jesus continued to focus his teaching ministry on the Twelve (v. 31). (CSB)

9:31 is going to be betrayed. This is a passive action. He is allowing it to happen to him.

9:32 were afraid to ask him about it. It is someone near Christ who gave Him over to those who will kill Him. No wonder the disciples are afraid to ask any further questions. Rather, they push His coming passion out of their minds, and instead argue about who of them will be the greatest in the coming kingdom of heaven. (PBC)

9:34 they kept quiet. Like children caught with hands in the cookie jar. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

9:35 Sitting down. To teach them that, He called the Twelve before Him, in a very formal and impressive way. They should, for once, get His full meaning. (Kretzmann)

9:36 He took child. This was a very young child perhaps even an infant. This child represented not even a hint of power. Children have been and continue to be taken advantage of and harmed. They also are the most gullible in life and have great trust in what they are told. Jesus is teaching the disciples to eschew power and to have faith in his gospel actions.