

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. ¹¹ As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? ¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. ¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, ¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. ¹⁵ Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. ¹⁶ This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? ¹⁷ All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger. ¹⁸ Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

5:10-20 It is difficult to date or identify the author of Ecclesiastes. Some conservative scholars have defended Solomonic authorship, while others have placed it much later. The lack of consensus on these points suggests that the author might simply be best referred to by his Hebrew title, *Kohelet*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

As a part of the canon of Holy Scripture, the book provides a marvelous though often discomfiting portrait of life. Shaped by an intricate system of polarities (see especially ch 3), the author is sometimes thought to be pessimistic or even cynical. I would suggest that “realistic” is a more apt description. Apart from God, all things are meaningless. But with him, in him, and through him, all things have meaning and purpose, and the believer has hope and joy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

5:10 Greater wealth does not bring satisfaction (see 1Ti 6:9–10). (CSB)

Corrupt desires are insatiable. Consider the difference between need and desire (cf Mt 6:19–21, 24–34; 1Tm 6:9–10). (TLSB)

Behind this greed lies an insatiable lust for money. Those who love money never have enough. The elder Rockefeller was once asked, “How much money does it take to satisfy a person?” The billionaire snapped back, “Always a little more!” (PBC)

The Hebrew word *kesep*, “silver,” is here translated as “money” and repeated twice for emphasis. This is a synecdoche for wealth, i.e., the use of the specific for the general. The author warns about the love of earthly wealth by using the verb *a'hb*, “love,” that is

here and elsewhere translated αγαπάω in the Septuagint. The condition described is that of a kind of devotion that is modeled on God's love for the world and the love we are to bear toward him. Thus, this is idolatry because silver is exchanged for God as the object of love. For this reason, a lover of money is excluded from the Pastoral Office (1 Tim 3:3), and St. Paul further warns that the "love of money is a root of all kinds of evil," because it leads one away from the faith (1 Tim 6:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

"This also is vanity." The Hebrew noun *habel* (here translated "vanity" in the ESV) is a particularly rich term and common in Ecclesiastes, appearing some thirty-five times in the book. (See, for example, the opening verses, 1:1–2.) It can mean "breath" but usually means vanity, meaninglessness, perishing. A theme of Ecclesiastes is that earthly things have no meaning when they are possessed apart from God. Here, wealth is not just apart from God, but is loved instead of God. There is nothing satisfying for such a person. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

5:11–12 Greater wealth brings greater anxiety. (CSB)

Great wealth brings greater anxiety (see SC, Ninth and Tenth Commandments, p xxxvi). The more one has, the more one covets. (TLSB)

It does not satisfy. It brings an increase of retinue and expenditure and deprives its owners of sleep. (Concordia Bible)

True rest is found in the Lord, not in abundance (cf Lk 12:13–21). (TLSB)

A man might become so wealthy that he has more riches than he could ever use; all he can do is "feast his eyes on them." For all his wealth, such a man isn't much better off than a poor man who also feasts his eyes on riches he can't make use of. Still another person might have enough money to be a man of leisure, but for one reason or another is never able to enjoy his leisure. (PBC)

The more a person gains "goods," *hatobah* (that is, the "money" of v 10 and the things money can buy), and makes them his god, the more that person loses any peace and real security. Others will try to benefit from the rich ("they increase who eat them"), and he will lose sleep at night. This is contrasted to the "laborer" (*ha'bed*), that is, the one who works for a living, who finds sleep at the close of day regardless of how much he possesses. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

LHM – 9/9/15

... for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:11b-13

Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming is a spectacular and an incredibly fascinating place.

With its bubbling paint pots, its geysers which perform, more or less, according to schedule, and an

abundance of flora and fauna, Yellowstone has something for everyone to see. It's not an exaggeration to say it offers a kaleidoscope of ever-changing vistas and experiences.

That being said, it's easy to understand why more than three million people will make the pilgrimage to spend some time in one of the Lord's pretty-near perfect places.

Did you notice the carefully chosen words in that last sentence: *pretty-near perfect places*?

I wrote "pretty-near perfect" because there are some folks who find Yellowstone disappointing. For example, this year a suggestion was turned in by a person who apparently stayed at Yellowstone Lodge. The note said, "Our visit was wonderful but we never saw any bears. Please train your bears to be where guests can see them. This was too expensive to not get to see bears."

Although I have not spoken to any Yellowstone rangers, I believe it unlikely they will be implementing this suggestion any time soon. I guess it all goes to prove that you can't please everybody.

Years ago, during a confirmation discussion on the Lord's omnipotence, a student raised her hand and said, "I know something God can't do. God can't please everybody." She was right. God couldn't please Adam and Eve with a perfect Garden and He hasn't pleased most people since the fall into sin.

All too often sinners believe *God does too little, too much, too soon, or too late*.

Sinners believe that because they think they know better than the Lord when it comes to how and when things should be done. I am afraid it takes some maturing and experience for people to get to that point where they can join their voices to that of St. Paul and say, "I have learned in whatever situation I find myself to be content."

It takes a bit of faith to sincerely pray, "Nevertheless, Thy will, not mine be done" (see Luke 22:42).

Still, contentment with and acceptance of God's wisdom is the Christian's goal. We need to strive for a faith that knows the Heavenly Father who sent His Son to give His life as a ransom for sinful humanity is always going to do what is right and best for us -- always, every time.

And that may even mean we are content when we don't see bears when we go to Yellowstone.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, let me be content to trust Your grace and mercy in every situation of life. This I ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

5:13-14 These beautifully constructed verses describe the futility of loving one's wealth. Hidden in the English translation in v 13 is the repetition of the word *ra'ah*, "evil," to open and close v 13. The beginning and end of v 13 might be translated as "There is a grievous evil . . . to his evil," rather than "There is a grievous evil . . . to his hurt" as in the ESV. Moreover, this is termed a "grievous evil," a phrase that will recur in v 16. Just how *habel*, "vain," love of money is (v 10) can be empirically verified by the results from a "bad venture" (*bə 'inyav ra'*, i.e., business deal)—the rich person, who loves his money, is left with nothing to pass on to his own child. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

5:13 GRIEVOUS EVIL – After a life of toil to both the owner and his heirs, it must at all events be left behind at death. (Concordia Bible)

When one of the wealthiest men in history, John D. Rockefeller, died, his accountant was asked, "How much did John D leave?" The accountant's reply? "All of it." (Luc-Light)

harm. Including worry about his possessions. (CSB)

Hoarding wealth can invite charlatans, sin, pride, and love of money, thus drawing one away from the Lord and His Word. (TLSB)

In his greed a man might hoard his wealth. He becomes so obsessed with it that he becomes a slave to it. (PBC)

5:14 SOME MISFORTUNE – We shouldn't get the idea from the word translated "misfortune" that Solomon is talking about bad luck. As was mentioned earlier, the Bible rules out the concepts of luck or chance. God is always working behind the scenes. He is in control. (PBC)

Things are not always as they seem. Entrepreneurs often have debt that exceeds their assets, making their apparent fortune worthless. This man is even unable to provide for his child. (TLSB)

5:15-16 There are no trailer hitches on hearses! Just as (*ka'asher*) one is born naked, that is precisely how one exits this world. The Hebrew word *'arom*, "naked," is the same word used to describe Adam and Eve in their original state of innocence (Gen 3:1). (See Luke 12:14–21.) This is a "grievous evil" (*ra'ah cholah*) in v 16, a phrase already seen in v 13. If one's life is defined by those things that must be left behind at death, all of the effort to gain more earthly possessions is like laboring for the wind; just as you cannot possess and keep the wind, neither can you truly possess and keep the riches of earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

5:15 *He takes nothing.* See Lk 12:14–21. (CSB)

Cradle to grave. We come into the world with nothing and depart the same way (cf Lk 12:14–21). The rich and the poor are equalized. (TLSB)

The loss of wealth by "evil toil" leads the Preacher's thoughts to its final and inevitable loss at death. (Concordia Bible)

It's said that when Alexander the Great lay on his deathbed he commanded that contrary to the usual custom his hands not be wrapped. He wanted everyone to see his empty hands as he was carried to his grave. And so in death the great conqueror and king of nations was on equal terms with the poorest beggar. (PBC)

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When Job lost all his wealth, he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). St Paul probably had both Job and Ecclesiastes in mind when he wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we can be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for

money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:6-10). (PBC)

5:16 GRIEVOUS EVIL – Temporal world is fleeting and retreats from us at death. (TLSB)

5:17 EATS IN DARKNESS – This depicts the greedy man working late into the night before taking time to eat. (PBC)

He eats the bread of sorrows. This is not a repentant sorrow before God (cf Ps 77:2) but anger in old age, where affliction and failing health beg the question as to the worthiness of laboring “under the sun.” (TLSB)

The person who substitutes possessions for God will live “all his days” (*kal yamav*) in a state of darkness, vexation or sadness, sickness, and anger. This is as good as it gets without God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

FRUSTRATION, AFFLICTION AND ANGER – That’s what people get if riches are their obsession. And in the end they inherit not even the wind which blows across their grave. (PBC)

5:18–20 See note on 2:24–25. (CSB)

5:18-19 But there is another way unlike the hopeless life lived apart from God. The writer tells us that, in contrast to vv 13 and 16, where he saw a “grievous evil,” “I have seen good.” In place of the evil meaninglessness of a life lived loving possessions is a life lived in the toil “that God has given him” (*’asher natan lo ha’elohim*). When life is lived in the knowledge of God, even toil for the few days of life on earth is joyous and fulfilling. As “vanity” or “meaninglessness” is a theme in Ecclesiastes, so also is pleasure in the simple joys of life in God’s creation (see 2:24–5; 3:12–13). “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth” confesses the goodness of life in a creation of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

5:18 IS GOOD AND PROPER TO EAT AND DRINK...FIND SATISFACTION – Since riches are unsatisfying, uncertain, attended with an increase of trouble and anxiety, and must all be left behind at death, the wise man will be contented with the supply of his daily wants, and will lay up treasure in heaven. (CB)

Theme of 2:24–25; 3:12–13, 22 returns. Only in God does life have meaning and true pleasure. Without Him, nothing satisfies. True pleasure comes only when we acknowledge and revere God (12:13). (TLSB)

Here Solomon paints a much happier scene than in the previous verses. He shows us a household where godliness and contentment reign in place of greed and discontent. He portrays a child of God, a believer. (PBC)

TOILSOME LABOR – Although labor remains “toilsome” for this person, he is able “to find satisfaction” in it. God enables him to enjoy his possessions and to “be happy in his work.”

This worker accepts his lot in life – his talents, opportunities and possessions. His work is not a frenzied attempt to pile up riches. He works because it's the lot God has given him in life. In the words of Paul, we are to do "all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). WE try to make the best possible use of our life as a way of saying thanks to God for the gift of life and for His many blessings. (PBC)

5:19 GIFT – Cf Ps 145:15–16. Life is God's gift, as is the enjoyment of life. He appoints the number of days we have to serve Him with joy and gladness of heart (Jb 14:5). (TLSB)

5:20 DAYS OF HIS LIFE – Often the evils that attended them (Concordia Bible)

KEEPS HIM OCCUPIED WITH GLADNESS OF HEART – Answers his desire in the joy with which he fills his heart. The thankful and contented enjoyment of God's present gifts causes him to forget the ills with which life is checkered. (Concordia Bible)

A cheerful heart is a gift of God. It allows life's most difficult experiences to pale in comparison with the inexpressible love He has first demonstrated to us by grace alone. (TLSB)

"God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart." The "heart" (*leb*) is the center of one's thoughts, hopes, and feelings. This heart is filled "with joy" (*bəsimchat*). (See Ps 45:16; Ps 106:5.) No matter the circumstances, even in the midst of difficulties and labor, the Lord gives joy to one who recognizes him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

He isn't filled with worry but with gladness. Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. It not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?...But seek first [God's] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:25-34). (PBC)

Where does one find gladness of heart and the kingdom of God and His righteousness? They come only from listening to God's Word. The Bible alone tells us of God's love in Christ the Savior – promised in the OT and fulfilled in the NT. To have Christ is to possess the highest wisdom and most priceless treasure. Then our lives will be truly happy regardless of our circumstances. (PBC)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 4:1-13

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work."⁵ And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."⁶ It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. ⁷ Therefore God again set a certain

day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.¹² For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

4:1 *the promise of entering his rest still stands.* Salvation is still available. “His rest” cannot refer ultimately to the rest in Canaan offered to the Israelites. That temporary, earthly rest gained under Joshua (see v. 8; see also note on Jos 1:13) pointed to a rest that is spiritual and eternal. (CSB)

God’s promise of forgiveness and peace remains true and can be lost only if we refuse it. (TLSB)

The key word in this section is “rest.” Eight times the author uses it, in addition to the special word “Sabbath-rest.” That rest of which he writes must be important. The eternal rest awaiting all believers in Christ in heaven is all-important, so that the author’s pastoral heart reaches out in urgent warning to his readers. (PBC)

BE CAREFUL ... HAVE FALLEN SHORT – He wanted not a single one of them to miss out on the heavenly rest into which God Himself entered when He had finished His work of creation and now which the entry of Israel into Canaan under Joshua. (PBC)

let us fear. We should carefully watch that our trust is in the promise of God rather than in human understanding. (TLSB)

4:2 *good news.* The promise of rest, to the people of Israel through the gift of the land, and to the Church with the gift of new life in Christ. (TLSB)

WAS NO VALUE TO THEM – We should not resemble the Israelites in their unbelief in the Word of God, as the writer wishes to emphasize: For indeed we, as also they, have had a Gospel preached to us, but the Word of their hearing did not profit them, because it was not thoroughly mixed with faith in those that heard it. The promise of God even to the children of Israel did not merely embrace the promise of the possession of Canaan, but also that of the blessings of the Messiah. The redeeming grace and favor of God had been proclaimed to them at various times; the promise given to Abraham that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed was their precious heritage, whose significance was also understood by their teachers. But all this glorious proclamation did them no good. They heard it, indeed, it was passed on from father to son, but it was not mixed with faith in their hearts, they did not place their hope of salvation in its gracious promises, and so it really profited them nothing. The fault thus lay not with God, for He had provided for the proclamation of the Gospel-message, but with themselves; they lost the blessings of the promise by their unbelief, Hos. 13, 9. (Kretzmann)

COMBINE IT WITH FAITH – faith is not a matter of ears only, but of the heart. The gospel message, when it beats on the eardrums only, leads to no eternal rest. Faith is required, the author reminds us, using for the first time this word which is also a favorite of his. Israel lost the promised rest because of the lack of faith. Must not our constant prayer as we hear that precious gospel be, “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark9:24)? (PBC)

By faith, we receive the promises of God and become members of His household (3:2). Trusting in God’s promise, we receive the gifts that God gives. Luth: “These three—faith, the Word, and the heart—become one. Faith is the glue or the bond. The Word is on one side; the heart is on the other side. But through faith they become one spirit, just as man and wife become ‘one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24). Therefore it is true that the heart is combined with the Word through faith and that the Word is combined with the heart through the same faith” (AE 29:160). (TLSB)

4:3 *we who have believed enter that rest.* Just as entering physical rest in Canaan demanded faith in God’s promise, so salvation-rest is entered only by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. (CSB)

Prefigured by the promise of a new life for God’s people in the Promised Land. This promise is fulfilled in Christ Jesus, who gives us an eternal home and rest. (TLSB)

his work has been finished since the creation of the world. God rested from his work on the seventh day of creation (see v. 4; Ge 2:2), and thus his rest is already a reality. The rest God calls us to enter (vv. 10–11) is not our rest but his rest, which he invites us to share. (CSB)

Focuses on God’s seventh day of creation. As God’s rest has existed from the foundation of the world, so His people throughout time have been free to enter this rest and peace. (TLSB)

4:4 ON THE SEVENTH DAY GOD RESTED – God’s rest on the seventh day was the rest that follows finished and holy work, a rest characterized by perfect contentment and infinite satisfaction. It is this rest, this eternal blessedness and total fulfillment, that He wants to share with His children. Each of those six days of creation had an ending as well as a beginning, but of the day of rest this is not stated. Of course, that seventh day also had to be a twenty-four hour day as the others, but the rest it symbolized has no ending. The beauty of it is that he not only invites, but His grace through word and sacrament produces in us the faith necessary for entrance into that eternal rest. (PBC)

4:5 SHALL NEVER ENTER MY REST – Cites Ps 95:11, which speaks of God’s judgment because of His people’s refusal to enter the Promised Land. Cf Nu 16. (TLSB)

4:6–8 Israel’s going into Canaan under Joshua was a partial and temporary entering of God’s rest. That, however, was not the end of entering, as shown in the continuing invitation of Ps 95:7–8. (CSB)

4:6 He now applies the argument by admonishing the Hebrews. (TLSB)

SOME WILL ENTER THAT REST – In Is. 40:8 of his book Isaiah declared, “The word of our God stands forever,” and in Matthew 24:35 Jesus repeated the thought, “My words will never pass away.” God’s word is always sure. He promised rest; His promise still stands even though Israel lost the rest; His promise will be fulfilled in others entering that rest. (PBC)

4:7 *calling it Today.* See note on 3:13. (CSB)

The “today” in which God offered His rest did not end with the sad incident in the desert. A long time later, over 400 years in fact, we hear Him offering His rest to the Israel of David’s time. Nor did His “today” end with them. To Hebrew Christians reading His words centuries later, to all who read them today, He still speaks. The present is God’s “today” for us. Only He knows how long it will last. Through the word His voice speaks to us proclaiming the gospel and offering His rest in more glorious form than Israel ever heard it. (PBC)

4:8 *if Joshua had given them rest.* Eventually, God’s people possessed the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, but the ultimate rest was with the second Joshua, Jesus, who saves His people from their sin. (TLSB)

In the Greek the names Joshua and Jesus are the same; the context must help determine which one is meant. What a thought! The first “Joshua” could not lead them into God’s true peace, but there was another one who could and did, with His life-blood as the price. (PBC)

4:9 *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest.* † God’s rest may still be entered through faith in his Son. (CSB)

God has fully completed the six days of His work in creation; thus, His Sabbath rest extends throughout time. In Christ, God’s people enter into God’s day of rest and experience the peace He gives. (TLSB)

Relief for weary souls is found in the Sabbath-rest. The Son Himself provides that rest (Mt. 11:28). We attain that rest through faith in God’s Son. He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:28) because He is both the agent of creation before the first Sabbath, and the author of our salvation (Heb. 2:10; cf. 12:2). The connection between creation-rest and salvation-rest is apparent in the two formulations of the Third Commandment. Ex 20:8-11 bases the Sabbath on God’s creation, while Deut 5:12-15 bases it on God’s redemption of His people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

For us in the NT the picture is even clearer. Those Sabbath days were, as Colossians 2:17 points out, “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” In Christ, shadow has become reality. Through His death and resurrection the way to God’s eternal rest is fully built and opened wide. What we need now are not OT Sabbath days, but a faith in Christ, “that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe.” (PBC)

4:10 *rests from his own work.* Whereas God rested from the work of creation, the believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his own works and rests in the finished work of Christ on the

cross. According to some, however, the believer's final rest is in view here (see Rev 14:13). (CSB)

Enjoying the result of God's completed work. The benefits of Christ's completed work, received by faith, are distributed in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. (TLSB)

Rest is important to God – and to us. The child of God must put aside any attempts to gain salvation through His labors. Even now we rest from such futile striving. A great burden has been taken off our backs. We rest on the Sabbath to praise God for giving to us our eternal salvation in Christ. By His promise, we will finally enter eternal rest and cease our labor (Rev. 14:13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Rest implies cessation from work, a laying down of that which tires. So also with the heavenly rest which Christ brings and to which He leads. "Anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work," the author reminds us. Before faith, man seeks to work out his own salvation. (PBC)

4:11 *make every effort.* † Not a call to earn one's salvation by works, but an exhortation to enter salvation-rest through faith and not follow Israel's sad example in the desert. (CSB)

We do this in two ways: (1) by daily returning to our Baptism, renouncing the devil and all evil; (2) by trusting God's mercy in Christ, who has prepared our eternal rest in heaven (Jn 14:2). (TLSB)

This does not contradict the fact that we enter not through our own efforts, but through faith in God's promise. Other passages that use the verb for Christian striving include Gal. 2:10; Eph. 4:3; 2 Peter 1:10, 15; 3:14. Our effort is not to gain salvation, but to live and act in faith and obedience in accord with God's Word, so that we may enter the promised rest. Grace alone and faith alone do not negate the urgency of good works, but affirm that works will follow and result from faith. "Make every effort" contrasts with the example of the slothful Israelites, who complained in the desert, indulged in idolatry, and longed to return to a life of ease in Egypt. God swore that they would not enter His rest (Ps. 95:11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

After salvation, the believer still labors. He spends himself in living service to the One who loved him and gave Himself for him. Of that service we never grow weary, though we often weary in it. (PBC)

4:12–13 The reasons for giving serious attention to the exhortation of v. 11. (CSB)

4:12 *word of God.* God's truth was revealed by Jesus (the incarnate Word; see Jn 1:1, 14), but it has also been given verbally, the word referred to here. This dynamic word of God, active in accomplishing God's purposes, appears in both the OT and the NT (see Ps 107:20; 147:18; Isa 40:8; 55:11; Gal 3:8; Eph 5:26; Jas 1:18; 1Pe 1:23). The author of Hebrews describes it as a living power that judges as with an all-seeing eye, penetrating a person's innermost being.

The Word remains forever and always accomplishes the work that it is sent to do (see note, Is 55:11). The person striving (v 11) will be helped by the Word. (TLSB)
It contains Law and Gospel, and works judgment and salvation: those who believe the Word will enter rest, while those who reject and disobey it will not. The living Word became incarnate (Jn 1:1, 14). We see the Word in action in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The word does things. It is not passive or outmoded, but always up-to-date and effective as God Himself said in Isaiah 55:11, “It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (PBC)

living. First descriptor for the sake of emphasis. God’s Word gives life. (TLSB)

active. Or, effective. (TLSB)

sharper than any two-edged sword. Even the sharpest sword can cut only through flesh and bone; God’s Word cuts through any spiritual barriers that stand between human beings and God. (TLSB)

soul and spirit, joints and marrow. The totality and depth of one’s being. (CSB)

God’s Word cuts to the innermost part of a human being. (TLSB)

The short sword carried by the Roman legionary was sharp and with its double edge could cut in any direction. But God’s word is far sharper and with its cutting edges can divide even the indivisible. Who can tell where soul and spirit touch or divide? Yet God’s word slices the two as easily as a sharp scissors glides through thin cloth. (PBC)

JUDGES THE THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDES OF THE HEART – So deeply the word penetrates into man’s innermost being, exposing his most secret parts. The people who heard Peter’s sermon on Pentecost knew about the penetrating action of this double-edged sword. Acts 2:37 tells us, “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?” (PBC)

God’s Word exposes the true state of a person’s heart before God. The comparison to a sword emphasizes God’s work in our lives through the Law, in keeping with the exhortation in 3:13. Luther: “Christ’s Word breaks through and wounds. It takes away every ground of trust and ascribes redemption solely to the blood of Christ; it pricks and wounds the soul. This is a health-bestowing wound, for these weapons kill in order to make alive.... It is, however, a fall that is happy and full of consolation, demonstrating the power and success of the Word” (AE 12:225). See note, Dt 32:39. (TLSB)

4:13 *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight*. The author associates the activity of the word with the activity of God as though they are one and the same—which in a sense they are. (CSB)

Image is of a sacrificial animal prepared for slaughter. Before the power of God's Word we have no defense. Unless God has mercy, we will die. (TLSB)

The penetrating Word is powerful because the Word is God (Jn. 1:1). Through the Word made flesh, God reconciled the world to Himself. That is another way of saying that we are at peace with God; we are at rest with the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

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we must give account. In all our thoughts, words, and deeds, we are accountable to God, the eternal Judge who sees all (cf Rm 14:10–12). (TLSB)

3:7–4:13 God's people missed rest in the Promised Land through their unbelief. This is a warning to us. God calls us to trust Him and to enter into the rest that He has enjoyed since the completion of creation. In Christ Jesus, we have rest from the accusation of the Law. The Holy Spirit leads us to trust in Christ, granting us everlasting peace. • Lord Jesus, You are my rest. May I always look to You when I am weary and afraid. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 10:23-31

²³ **Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”** ²⁴ **The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”** ²⁶ **The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”** ²⁷ **Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”** ²⁸ **Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”** ²⁹ **“I tell you the truth,”** Jesus replied, **“no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”**

10:23 JESUS LOOKED AROUND – Jesus looked around to see impression that was left on disciples. (Kretzmann)

The verb *periblepō* occurs seven times in the New Testament (Mk 3:5, 34; 5:32; 9:8; 10:23; 11:11; Lk 6:10). In all but one instance (Mk 9:8), Jesus is the subject of the verb; four of the seven examples are participles followed by a finite verb of Jesus speaking. When *periblepō* appears, it typically follows an event that invites Jesus' intervention.

The gaze of the Lord then cuts through all human foolishness and silences the onlookers as the Messiah is about to speak. After his eyes make preparations, all is ready for the word that reveals the person and work of Christ. His gaze can precede a word of Law (Mk 3:35; Lk 6:10), Gospel (Mk 5:32), or both (Mk 10:23). His gaze can lead to a clarification about the working of his kingdom (Mk 3:34; 10:23). The gaze and the word of Christ particularly dispel human wisdom and replace it with the work of Christ. All but one (Lk 6:10) instance of *periblepō* occurs in Mark, the Gospel where we particularly come to know Jesus through his actions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

HARD ... RICH TO ENTER KINGDOM OF GOD – "He went on to say." Very often the wealthy, like this young man, cannot give up their love and trust in their wealth. (Buls)

This shows how easy it is to become attached to wealth. This aspect of personal and public concern was one of the three major pillars of Jewish piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer). The affirmation of verse 23 was shocking precisely because it entails the rejection of the concept of merit accumulated through the good works accomplished by the rich, which was presupposed in contemporary Judaism. (Lane)

pōs duskolōs hoi ta chrēmata echontes eis tēn basileian tou theou eiseleusontai: In Jesus' conversation with the disciples, he slowly shifts the focus from humanity to the Savior, namely, a shift from Law to Gospel. To introduce this shift, he illustrates human shortcoming. Jesus varies his grammatical constructions as he presents this illustration. First, in v 23 he employs a substantival use of the participle *echō*, "those having wealth/the possessors of wealth." The plural of *chrēma* indicates wealth or capital. The sentences literally flows: "How difficultly will those having wealth enter into the kingdom of God." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Those who are rich and are Christians at the same time, hold these good as though they possessed them not. (Kretzmann)

Not all the rich begin or end life this young ruler. Remember Abraham, David, Zacchaeus, Cornelius, Lydia and many others. The difference? By God's grace they did not serve their riches, but put their riches and themselves into the service of Christ and the gospel. (PBC)

10:24 DISCIPLES WERE AMAZED – Staggered. (Phillips)

"They were amazed." A strong word, in the passive. Then Jesus makes another statement, an absolute statement. The Koine variant, followed by the KJV, is not found in our translations. "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! KJV." Lenski argues vehemently for it. But the statement has more point without the variant. (Buls)

The Jews regarded wealth as a mark of God's favor. The disciples thought rich people had the best chance to enter the kingdom of God because of all the good things they could afford to do. (TLSB)

CHILDREN – This was a term of affection. (TLSB)

Note that Jesus addresses them with "Children." (Buls)

Hendricksen: The twelve were very dear to Him; yet he knows how weak, how prone to error, they are. (Buls)

True. Since Mark 8:27, the final ten months of Jesus' ministry, Jesus spends much time instructing the disciples. That should not be overlooked here. (Buls)

HARD TO ... ENTER KINGDOM – Trusting in worldly goods makes it impossible for a person to enter into the kingdom of God. (Kretzmann)

This is an understatement. No people will ever enter the Kingdom based on their own reason or strength. (TLSB)

Repetition is calculated to provoke careful reflection. (Lane)

After *pōs duskolon estin*, "how difficult it is." Some manuscripts (later ones) insert a reference to those who put their trust in riches and thereby coordinate this verse with vv 23, 25. Examples of such reliance on riches occur with Simon Magus or Felix. Simon brings the apostles money, hoping to buy the Holy Spirit and his miraculous power (Acts 8:18–20). Since Felix hopes for a bribe, he often calls Paul out of prison for conversation (Acts 24:26) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

As the disciples encounter Jesus' gradual shift away from humanity to the Christ, amazement and dumbfounded stupor occur. This amazement likely happens because the rich in Jesus' day are considered pious, generous, and worthy of favor (Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps 128:1–2; Is 3:10). In contrast, the poor are sometimes viewed as less pious, being poorly educated in the Law (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], Mk 10:23). In v 24 (and v 26), their confusion is not just momentary, since the imperfect of *thambeō* (and of *ekplēssō*, v 26, even more intense than *thambeō*) indicates ongoing amazement at Jesus' revelation. In contrast to the specificity of v 23, Jesus then makes a sweeping, overarching statement of how difficult it is for anybody to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, Jesus varies grammatical constructions. Here he employs the impersonal subject, "Children, how difficult *it* is." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

10:25 *eye of a needle*. The camel was the largest animal found in Palestine. The vivid contrast between the largest animal and the smallest opening represents what, humanly speaking, is impossible. (CSB)

Don't worry about the variant readings. All translations agree with Nestle's Greek text reading. The single point of this verse is that which is impossible for man. Who is meant by "rich man?" It is plain from verse 26 what Jesus meant. The disciples were not wealthy but realized that Jesus included them. Jesus means any and every man who trusts in his earthly possessions more than in Jesus. Or maybe we should not even say: "more than." (Buls)

A camel, proverbially the largest animal, had a better chance of slipping through the eye of a needle, proverbially the smallest opening, than the most favored human being had of entering the kingdom of God through works. (TLSB)

The camel was the largest animal in Palestine, and the eye of the needle was the smallest opening available. Jesus chooses such disparate examples to make the impossibility obvious. The disciples' amazement about the pious rich not entering God's kingdom demonstrates a confusion of the two types of righteousness. Even the highest level of civil righteousness still does not merit righteousness before God. When the onus is on humanity, a camel can more easily squeeze through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter God's kingdom. Here Jesus again specifies the rich, as in v 23, in contrast to his more generic statement in v 24. Jesus once more varies the construction with a substantival adjective *plousion* as the subject followed by an infinitive. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The disciples were not wealthy but realized that Jesus included them. (B)

10:26 EVEN MORE AMAZED – The disciples understood that the manner in which Jesus spoke of the rich in fact blocks the way for any man and they were frightened by the implication. (Lane)

"Even more amazed." A very strong expression. NEB: "They were more astonished than ever." Their amazement gave evidence to itself by what they said. The translations are divided between reading "to each other" and "to Him," nor does it make any difference. Matthew and Luke are of no help at this point. "Well then!" is an exclamation in the Greek, not translated by NIV. The disciples betray their synergism and openly contradict the passive used by Jesus which denotes God as agent. (Buls)

Lenski: The sense is 'And then nobody can be saved!' i.e. what Jesus says cannot be true. (Buls)

The disciples acknowledge that in this event it would be impossible also for the poor; for if the abundance of earthly wealth in the case of the rich should make for the absolute impossibility of personal salvation, will not then earthly possessions, on the whole, where they are not so much in evidence, and even where they are wanting, but for this very reason are prized so highly, serve to render salvation difficult, and even impossible of attainment. (Ylvisaker)

BE SAVED - *tis dunatai sōthēnai*: The disciples have it correct when they use the passive, “be saved.” Jesus affirms this when he credits God alone for salvation. The words of Christ make the disciples rightly despair of humanity as the source of salvation. They are rightly led to the question of who then can be saved. Their question helps redirect the focus to the person and work of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

10:27 *With man this is impossible, but not with God.* Salvation is totally the work of God. Every attempt to enter the kingdom on the basis of achievement or merit is futile. Apart from the grace of God, no one can be saved. (CSB)

"Looked at them" again denotes Jesus' love. "He went on to say." On the thought in this verse look at Genesis 18:14 and Luke 1:37. "Man" means "people." Note the word order. (Buls)

It is no more impossible for God to save a self-righteous rich man than to save a self-righteous poor man. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: God has the power to convert and renew sinful people so that their heart is torn loose from all earthly things and they cling to Him alone. (Buls)

Don't overlook the fact that the disciples, and all of us, have a dear lesson to learn. (Buls)

The usage of *emblemō* resembles the usage of *periblepō* (v 23). When the verb appears, a significant revelation about Christ typically follows. Of the twelve occurrences in the New Testament, Jesus is the actor in six instances, two of which are Law (Lk 20:17; 22:61) and the remaining Gospel (Mt 19:26; Mk 10:21, 27; Jn 1:42). Jesus' intent gaze at his disciples with a subsequent word of Gospel (Mk 10:27) parallels Jesus' loving gaze at the rich young man in the previous pericope (Mk 10:21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

When human activity has been ruled out, excluded, and dried up, the unlimited flood of Christ's mercy enters in. The words “With man it is impossible” put the final nail into the coffin of human merit. The text then redirects the focus to Christ: “. . . but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” This indicates the limitlessness of God's grace, the nature of the Gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

God can bring even a rich man to renounce his dependence on riches, and to trust in the living God. (Concordia Bible with Notes)

People cannot enter the kingdom of God on their own merit. Yet, God calls and gathers people into His kingdom by grace (cf. Romans 3:21-26) (TLSB)

The Gospel is God's gift to man. (Lane)

10:28-31 Perhaps Peter accepts Jesus' statement that the rich do not merit the kingdom. Yet, presumably Peter does not understand Jesus as saying that saving oneself is impossible, but rather understands it to be just "difficult." As a result, Peter may be smugly pointing to the disciples' sacrificial acts, expecting merit before Jesus. They have forsaken everything. Jesus indicates that they indeed have a share in Jesus' blessing but also in his suffering. The Lord then further responds with these words: "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Wanting to be first, which is Law-based, does not match with having a share in Christ. Rather, Mark directs us to the Christ who served us with his death and resurrection. Although first, he became last in order to bring great blessing to us. The gifts that Jesus articulates in v 30 do not result from the disciples' works but from Christ's favor. Although first, he humbled himself as servant of all to the point of death. Christ's statement in v 31 leads to the third and final prediction of his death and resurrection in vv 32–34. The number three emphasizes the completeness and assurance of the event, just as Jesus' three days in the tomb assure the reality of death (v 34). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

10:28 WE HAVE LEFT EVERYTHING – The note on Matthew 19:27 states, "Though based on a misunderstanding, Peter's anguished cry is nonetheless poignant, for he had left everything to follow Jesus. Owing to the heartfelt nature of Peter's exclamation, Jesus responds not with a rebuke but with a wonderful promise and reassurance. (TLSB)

10:29 *I tell you the truth.* See note on 3:28. (CSB)

Following Jesus entailed the loss of possession, even life itself. He is speaking not of those who injure wife and children, but who bear injury because of the confession of the Gospel. For the Gospel's sake we should even leave our body. (TLSB)

gospel. See note on 1:1. (CSB)

10:30 *this present age ... the age to come.* These two terms take in all of time from the fall of man to the eternal state. The present age is evil (Gal 1:4), but the coming righteous age will begin with the second advent of Christ and continue forever. (CSB)

a hundred times as much ... and with them persecutions. The life of discipleship is a combination of promise and persecution, blessing and suffering. God takes nothing from a Christian without making multiplied restoration in a new and glorious form. Paradoxically, fellowship with other believers develops most deeply in persecution. (CSB)

More than replacing what we lost to follow Him. (TLSB)

persecutions. Satan will always stir up opposition against God's people. (TLSB)

These are blessings a hundred-fold greater than was the sacrifice he is called to make. (Concordia Bible with Notes)

age to come. After the resurrection of the dead (cf Mt 19:28). (TLSB)

BROTHERS... SISTERS ...MOTHER ...FATHER ...CHILDREN – Because we belong to Christ, flesh and blood relatives may spurn and ridicule us, and we may also suffer more serious persecutions. But Jesus assures us that we will have all we need in the family of our Lord Jesus Christ. His love dwelling in the hearts of believers will come to meet us. Those are bonds of love more precious than all earthly bonds of blood. They last into eternity. (PBC)

eternal life. Beyond the conflicts of history is the triumph assured to those who belong to God. (CSB)

The Savior has added also that he shall receive “now” in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life. He shall, then be recompensed here and in eternity for the painful severance of earthly ties. We shall have fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and house and home in the Church of God. If we forfeit the friendliness of the world, we gain the friendship of God and of the children of God; if we lose our earthly property, we receive the blessings of grace; if we are deprived of peace with men, we win that peace which passeth all understanding, and at last, the eternal peace. Truly, Jesus’ words are rich in promise. But may we remember that this is a reward of grace, an inheritance! We shall inherit eternal life. But the idea of an inheritance excludes every consideration of merit. (Ylvisaker)

10:31 *first will be last.* A warning against pride in sacrificial accomplishments such as Peter had manifested (v. 28). (CSB)

Jesus adds this word of warning and admonition. We must be faithful and persevere until the end. The reward may be easily forfeited. Peter and the other apostles should beware of any feeling of pride in the circumstance that they were the first who had left all to follow after Jesus. If they become arrogant and harp upon their legal prerogative, they shall be last and lose their reward completely. It is this concept which is unfolded in the following narrative of the laborers in the vineyard. (Ylvisaker)

The poor, sinners, and Gentiles whose confidence was in God alone would enter the Kingdom ahead of those whose spiritual confidence was in their worldly power and wealth. (TLSB)

There were men like Judas, one of the Twelve, or Caiaphas and Annas, high priest of God’s people. They thought of themselves as “first.” They did not end that way. But many a simple believer, ignored and despised by the great of this world, but accepted by God, ends up “first.” (PBC)

10:17–31 Jesus teaches His disciples that not even people with the greatest worldly means (e.g., a rich man) can enter the kingdom of God on their own merit. We cannot justify ourselves; we

receive salvation (“inherit eternal life”) solely by grace through faith in Jesus, just like a little child (10:13–16). • “My heart’s delight, My crown most bright, O Christ, my joy forever. Not wealth nor pride Nor fortune’s tide Our bonds of love shall sever.” Amen. (*LSB* 557:4). (TLSB)