

Fifth Sunday in Lent

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: ¹⁸ “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. ²⁰ The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, ²¹ the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

43:16–17 A reference to crossing the Red Sea (see v. 2 and note). Pharaoh’s chariots and horsemen were destroyed as Israel’s God fought against them (see 51:10; Ex 14:28; 15:4). – This was the first great redemptive act of God. (CSB)

43:16 WAY THROUGH THE SEA – The Lord prefaces His claim with a reminder of the exodus and the destruction of Pharaoh’s armies. (TLSB)

Yahweh’s “way (s)” and “path (s)” serve as metaphors for the cruciform life of faith (2:3). Repeatedly, though, Israel consistently followed its own ways, which led to the exile of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC and of the Southern Kingdom in 587 BC. Isaiah notes Israel’s unwillingness to walk in Yahweh’s ways in 30:11; 42:24; 53:6; 56:11; 57:10, 17; 59:8; 65:2; 66:3 (cf 58:13; 63:17). The prophet himself warned “not to walk in the way of this people” (8:11). In fact, the motif of Yahweh’s ways runs throughout Isaiah. To quote Quinn-Miscal: (CC p. 315)

[It] is at one and the same all of these: the moral and religious way of life, the dry path through the sea, the journey through the wilderness on the way back for Egypt (exodus) or from Assyria and Babylon (exile and dispersion), and the spiritual journey back to life in the Lord’s house, life on the holy mountain. (CC p. 315)

Unfortunately, for Israel this way became the road less traveled (cf. Mt. 7:13-14). It follows, then that if the nation is going to find the way, Yahweh must lead them. He made a way through the water in the first exodus (Ex 14:21-22), and he will repeat the miracle to guide the exiles back from Babylon. Together 43:16 ad 43:19 have in view the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the land conquest. Since the overthrow of one conqueror could merely spell the advent of another, leading to more secure bondage, it is explained that the fall of Babylon is an Egypt-exodus event, followed by the homeward journey fur of divine provision. Ultimately, God will regather his scattered people in Christ to their permanent homeland (Mt 24:31; Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22-24). (CC pp. 315-316)

MIGHTY WATERS – The area around the Red Sea were comparatively shallow, yet with a sudden change of the wind they may become the equivalent of a mad tide. (Leupold)

43:17 DREW OUT – In a stunning turn of phrase, Yahweh maintains that he not only led Israel’s hosts through the Red Sea, but he was also the commander of Egypt’s forces! As their military

strategist, Yahweh permitted them to pursue their mad course to their own death. He orchestrated the empire's defeat by hardening Pharaoh's heart (e.g., Ex 7:3; 9:7). This king believed that defeating Israel would be an easy victory (Ex 15:9), but he was dead wrong, literally. At the Red Sea, Israel did nothing to gain the victory (Ex 14:13-14; cf Zech 4:6). Yahweh did it all, literally. (CC p. 316)

Yahweh is also the Commander in chief over the evil Gog of Magog (Ezek 38:1-4), Satan (Rev 20:1-3, 7-10), and Gog and Magog (Rev 20:8). He is sovereign over every evil event, and in the end, he employs anti-God empires for the good of his people and the glory of his holy name (Is. 45:7; cf. Rom 8:28-29). (CC p. 316)

In this rehearsal of the first exodus, Yahweh does not mention Egypt or Pharaoh because he wants the focus to be upon his renewed act of salvation when he defeats Babylon and its last king, Naonidus. The first exodus was great. But Yahweh is about to renew it in a mightier manner! (CC p. 316)

All this is merely a drastic way of saying that even the most hostile forces that rage against the Lord and against his anointed are still only doing the behest of the One True God. That does not mean that Pharaoh, in sending forth his chariots, was not a free agent. But it does mean that the incomprehensible God, who controls all things, was manifesting his mysterious control even when the Egyptians went out with hostile intention. (Leupold p. 88)

snuffed out like a wick. Contrast 42:3. (CSB)

When men of their own free will chose to stand up to God and try to harm his people God can make very short work of putting them in their place. They really don't stand a chance.

The terms "chariot," "horse," and "army" frequently appear in Exodus 14-15. Egyptian military might is no match for Yahweh's east wind (Ex 14:21; 15:8, 10). The Song of the Sea celebrates that the enemy sunk down (Ex 15:5, 10), never to rise again. This is now Babylon's fate. (CC p. 316)

43:18 FORGET – Does not mean God's people should forget the former things by which He revealed Himself (46:9). The Lord instructs them to set aside reflection on the exodus so they can consider a still more glorious future. (TLSB)

So much of our sense of identity is based on our recollection of events in the past. One's reputation is the lingering recollection of events related to that person. Someone without a memory is someone without an identity. The church is called to refresh and keep alive the memory of God's past actions as a basis for his promises to act in the present and in the future. "Do this in remembrance of me." The steadfastness of God is the foundation of typology. "As God was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." – The statement must be meant in the sense of letting the memory linger on the events of the past, dwelling nostalgically on what happened in the good old days. So the thought is this: Let the grand past be over-topped by the more glorious future. Cultivate hope, not remembrance.

Here “Yahweh,” is “I will be who I will be” means that God has a future, and Israel’s future is dependent on this God. Therefore Israel must not dwell on the past. God’s future actions provide his people with strength and hope in facing the sorrows of the present day. “Do not remember” is a call not to forget the past but to shift attention to what God has to say about the future.

Why does Yahweh abruptly say, “Do not remember the former things”? Israel’s earlier texts play a foundational role in Isaiah 40-55. This is why Yahweh commands, “Remember this and stand firm. ...Remember the first things from of old” (46:8-9). The Pentateuch repeatedly exhorts Israel not to forget (e.g., Deut 6:12; 8:1-20), while the Passover was instituted lest they forget Yahweh’s mighty acts of judgment against Egypt (e.g., Ex 12:14). Yahweh charges the fathers to teach the exodus narrative to their children (e.g., Ex 12:26-27; Deut 6:20-21), and Israel is even commanded to make fringes on their clothes lest they forget Yahweh’s Word (Num 15:37-41). So why does Yahweh command, “Do not remember the former things?” (CC p. 316)

Israel’s faith had eroded into nostalgia. The captives were so transfixed upon the past that they were in danger of missing Yahweh’s current deliverance, first through Cyrus and then through the Suffering Servant. Earlier acts of salvation acted as a blindfold to Yahweh’s “new thing” (43:19). The Judeans enshrined the past to the point that it limited what they thought Yahweh could in the future. (CC pp. 316-317)

The former days can instruct, but they can also enslave. If faith becomes ossified, it does little good. Remembering can serve hope, but it [also] can replace it. The goal is for Israel not merely to confess, “As surely as Yahweh lives, who brought us out of Egypt” but also, “As surely as Yahweh lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north [i.e., Babylon]” (cf. Jer 23:7-8). Rather than looking back on the glory days of the exodus and living with retrospective angst, Yahweh wants his people to see him as their present-exodus God who is leading them into a glorious future. (CC p. 317)

And so the command “do not remember the former things” (48:18) is not absolute because, for instance, in 43:26 Yahweh invites the exiles to review the past (cf. 44:21; 46:9). The long-ago events need remembering because such remembering has the capacity to increase the conviction that God can so act, but needs forgetting because people must not think that Yahweh is only a God who acted way back then but cannot be expected so to act now. (CC p. 317)

No other deity is able to renew anything. Locked into the cycles of the season, nature gods can at most only do what they have always done. But Yahweh is the overlord of both creation and history! He employs participles in this section in order to highlight his salvific events for the present moment, “the one making,” 43:16, “the one bringing forth,” 43:17, “[I am] about to do,” 43:19. These participles indicate that it is Yahweh’s ongoing work to save his people. Is. 43:19-21 contains imperfect verbs that make the same point and extend into the future. When Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt, he did not exhaust all of his resources. Israel’s God is present, now, to liberate for eternity. All this draws attention to that original act of deliverance and victory that encourages people to believe in the possibility of another such act. (CC p. 317)

DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST – Things predicted and fulfilled (cf 41:22; 42:9; 43:9; 46:9; 48:3). (TLSB)

This statement must be meant in the sense of letting the memory linger on the events of the past, of dwelling nostalgically on what happened in the good old days. They are to cultivate hope, not remembrance. (Leupold p. 89)

That does not mean that they were to forget all about it; it simply means that they were not to dwell on this past deliverance. (PBC)

43:19-21 Israel could expect something new—a miracle so marvelous as to eclipse the former things. Cf Col 2:17. (TLSB)

43:19 *new thing*. See 42:9 and note. (CSB)

Rather than looking back on the glory days of the past exodus, the Lord wants His people to see Him as their present provider of exodus (cf Jer 23:7–8), their deliverer from Babylon. He demonstrates this by bringing life-giving water to His people living in the wilderness and desert (cf Ps 42:1; 63:1; Jn 4:14; Rv 7:16).

The laments in 40:27 and 49:14 indicate that the Israelites believed Yahweh either couldn't or wouldn't act in their favor. Little did they realize that he is willing and able to create a future out of the wreckage of their past. Unlike the Babylonian gods, who are images of nature caught in a recurring system and unable to do anything new, Yahweh is holy (40:25), outside of creation and above it. He is also able to step into history and direct its outcomes. And this he will do! (CC p. 417)

At one point in the first exodus, it appeared as though Yahweh had deserted his people (Ex 14:10-12). Soon after that, though, he delivered on his promises. After God's apparent absence in Babylon (Is. 54:7-8), he will again save captive Israel. The experience of abandonment that leads to salvation occurs climactically in the events on Good Friday and Easter. (CC p. 317)

Making a way for his people against huge obstacles is not new for Yahweh. What is new is that he has never specially squared off against Babylon. The use of the participle "doing" indicates that Yahweh is already acting, albeit behind the scenes, to bring about the future rise of Cyrus and his defeat of Babylon, as well as the Servant's suffering, death and resurrection. The similarity-but-difference becomes a means of articulating the idea that what is new is not really new at all, but was implicit all along, for those who, in the text's terms, can perceive it. There is, then, both continuity and discontinuity with Yahweh's new event. The new, always under suspicion in the ancient Near East, is validated by the old. Israel cannot afford entirely to disregard the old. But the nation cannot stay there either. Yahweh's day of salvation is now (49:8). To oppose his new thing is to stand with apostate Israel or the idolatrous nations (cf. Mt. 9:17; Lk 22:20; Rom 7:6; 1 Cor. 5:7). (CC p. 318)

Once it was through the waters; now it is a way through seemingly impassable dry, desert land. Then he removed the water; now he will furnish it. (Leupold p. 89)

The deliverance from Babylon becomes greater because it is a key event in God's plan of salvation. More than the deliverance from Egypt, the release from Babylon paves the way for the fulfilling of all God's promises of a spiritual deliverance. (PBC pp. 86-87)

When delivering Israel from Egypt he had made a path through the water. Now in delivering them from Babylon he set up a straight road through what seemed like an impassible desert. This deliverance was greater because it was leading to the fulfilling of God's promises yet to come which would provide spiritual deliverance to Israel and the whole world.

The things described as "new" are not totally new but are magnifications of typological precursors. The three major typological images interrelate to the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the restoration of creation. – The "new thing" that is to be eagerly anticipated is the impending exodus from Babylon. Indications of it coming must already have been discernible.
way in the desert. See 35:8; 40:3 and notes. (CSB)

In the first exodus, Yahweh created dry land in the midst of water (e.g., Ex 14:22-29). In this new exodus, he will create water in the midst of dry land, because now Israel needs to cross a desert rather than a body of water. This motif of Yahweh's care in the desert is taken up again in 48:20-21. The desert/wilderness is Isaiah 40-55 is without water (41:19-20; 48:21), barren (41:19; 51:13), and trackless (43:19). So Yahweh will make a way and build a highway in it (cf. 40:3) (CC p. 318)

streams in the wasteland. See v. 20; 32:2 and note. Contrast 42:15 and note. (CSB)

As God described this new thing, it might have reminded God's OT people of the journey through the wilderness under Moses. Then God fed His people in the wilderness; He provided water for them, sometimes miraculously. The same things are mentioned here. (PBC)

43:20 WILD ANIMALS – Even the wild beasts have an interest and a share in what happens to God's people. It will make them glad to behold what God does for them, so glad that they, in their own way "will honor" him, even "jackals" creatures notoriously shy and unfriendly.

Yahweh's renewed exodus is not just confined to Israel, but it also has cosmic dimensions. Both the arid landscapes and their animals will be transformed by Yahweh's salvific power. This recalls promises were creation itself is restored (e.g., 35:5-7; 41:17-20), even as it anticipates the renewal of the entire universe (65:17-25). (CC p. 318)

jackals ... owls. Creatures of the desert (see 13:21–22; 34:13–15; 35:7). (CSB)

Even the wild beasts have an interest and a share in what happens to God's people. It will make them glad to behold what God does for them, so glad that they, in their own way "will honor" him, even "jackals" creatures notoriously shy and unfriendly. (Leupold p. 89)

In the first exodus, animals suffered (e.g., Ex. 8:13; 9:6; 15:1). In this new exodus, the animals are pictured as praising Yahweh. In 34:13 "jackals" and "ostriches" live in once-inhabited deserted places and therefore symbolize destruction. Now these creatures of chaos are restored to their rightful place, and with the rest of creation, they are praising Yahweh. These

texts harmonize with the reference to the Noahic covenant in 554:9, which includes Yahweh's concern for "every living thing" (Gen 9:12). The eschatological objective is for everything that has breath to praise Yahweh (cf. Ps. 150:6) (CC p. 318)

STREAMS – Streams may never, in the course of this exodus have sprung up miraculously; but Israel never lacked for what was necessary for their subsistence during the return from Exile.

The threatening waters and rivers (Is. 43:2) will also be transformed. The same movement appears in Exodus 14-17. Initially the Red Sea was an insurmountable obstacle. Yet, after the exodus through them, the waters transitioned into signs of Yahweh's providential care (Ex 15:22-27; 17:1-7). Is 43:20-21 continues this theme. Whereas the old exodus conquered the water by making a way through the sea, this new exodus will make a way in the desert by Yahweh's creative redemption will be marshaled to bring life-giving water to his people who sojourn in the wilderness and desert (cf. Ps 42:2; 63:1; John 4:13-14; Rev. 7:15-16). (CC pp. 318-319)

MY CHOSEN – Like v 7, this section (vv 16–21) ends with a reminder of the people's purpose—to give praise to the Lord and spread His name among the nations (cf Gn 12:1–3). (TLSB)

43:21 FORMED...PROCLAIM MY PRAISE – God had formed and reformed Israel to "proclaim my praise" to the universe. Israel is God's witness to the world.

In Isaiah 40-55, the creation terms "to create," and "to form," are not employed for God creating any other nation other than Israel (43:1, 7, 15, 21; 44:2, 21, 24; 49:9). Israel owes the totality of its existence to Yahweh. Echoing 43:20-21, Peter writes: "But you are chosen race (Is 43:20), a royal priesthood, a holy nation,, a people for his possession (43:21), so that you may proclaim the excellencies (Is 43:21) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). (CC p. 319)

people ... proclaim my praise. Cf. 42:12. (CSB)

For this greater deliverance, the people were to proclaim the praise of God. He had formed them for the purpose of praise. God would refresh his people; they would praise him. (PBC p. 87)

Jesus came declaring, "Everyone who commits sins is a slave to sin" (Jn 8:34). Since the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity has been enslaved to sin, held captive by death, and thus barred from the tree of life (Gen 3:24). Yet through the righteous act of one man, Jesus Christ, who is "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6), we are led out of death and sin into justification and live (Rom 5:12-19). Through the Word and the saving Sacrament of Baptism, we are linked to this great exodus by means of Christ's resurrection (e.g., Acts 2:38-39; Rom 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:18-22). On the Last Day, upon our Savior's return, Isaiah's new exodus motif will find its consummation in the new earth (e.g., Rev. 15:1-4; 21:1-22:21). (CC p. 319)

EPISTLE – Philippians 3:4-14

³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

3:3 *circumcision*. Its true, inner meaning is realized only in believers, who worship God with genuine spiritual worship and who glory in Christ as their Savior rather than trusting in their own human effort (cf. Ro 2:28–29; Col 2:12–13; see also Dt 30:6; Eze 36:26). (CSB)

WORSHIP BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD – The Spirit of God generates a new heart and moves that soul to faith, which is the origin of genuine worship (praise of God and service to neighbor). (TLSB)

glory ... no confidence. Everyone is a “boaster,” either in Christ or in himself. (CSB)

The Apostle and all faithful workers in the Gospel serve God in the Spirit. In them dwells the Spirit of God. In them dwells the Spirit of God and moves them. They do not rely on the flesh and outward works. (Stoekhardt)

flesh. Weak human nature. Although the term “flesh” in Paul’s letters often refers to sinful human nature, it speaks here of the frailty of human nature: It is not worthy of our confidence; it cannot save. (CSB)

3:4–14 Paul’s personal testimony, a model for every believer; one of the most significant autobiographical sections in his letters (see Gal 1:13–24; 1Ti 1:12–16; cf. Ac 22:1–21; 26:1–23). (CSB)

3:4–6 Paul’s pre-Christian confidence, rooted in his Jewish pedigree, privileges and attainments.

3:4 CONFIDENCE – Paul is speaking of his physical and cultural heritage as an Israelite. (TLSB)

Paul says that outwardly as a Jew he will stand favorable comparison with any other Jew, and even come out on top. (Stoekhardt)

3:5 *eighth day*. See Ge 17:12. (CSB)

Such infant circumcision points to God's inclusion of His people in the covenant promise even at a tender age. It also anticipated when circumcision would end and Baptism would become the sign of the new covenant (Col 2:11–12). God finished the work of the original creation on the sixth day, and on the seventh He rested. The eighth day represented a new beginning. Christ finished the work of the new creation by redeeming us with His blood on the sixth day, Good Friday. On the Sabbath, He rested in the tomb. On Easter Sunday, Christ arose, starting the new creation on what may be referred to as the "eighth day." (TLSB – Note from Gen. 17:12)

of the people of Israel. Paul was born a Jew and was not a proselyte. (CSB)

Very probably these Judaistic false teachers had originally been Jewish proselytes, with whom the Apostle contrasts himself as a native Jew. That is why he also stresses his circumcision on the eighth day. (Stoekhardt)

tribe of Benjamin. His Jewish roots are deep and unambiguous. Jerusalem, the Holy City, lay on the border of the tribal territory of Benjamin. (CSB)

Hebrew of Hebrews. In language, attitudes and life-style (see Ac 22:2–3; Gal 1:14). (CSB)

There are only Hebrews in Paul's known ancestry. He was fiercely loyal to his race as a Hebrew. (TLSB)

Pharisee. See Ac 22:3; 23:6; 26:5. (CSB)

A most earnest sect of Judaism. (TLSB)

3:6 AS FOR ZEAL – There could be no doubt that Paul had been perfectly sincere, absolutely conscientious as a keeper of the Law, that he had a clean record before the Jews, though he had acted in moral blindness. (Kretzmann)

PERSECUTING THE CHURCH – Because Paul had been convinced that Jesus Christ intended to undermine Jewish law, he persecuted the followers of Jesus and the apostles and tried to destroy them (Ac 9:1-2). (TLSB)

legalistic righteousness. Righteousness produced by using the law as an attempt to merit God's approval and blessing (cf. v. 9)—a use of the law strongly opposed by Paul as contrary to the gospel itself (see Ro 3:27–28; 4:1–5; Gal 2:16; 3:10–12). (CSB)

faultless. In terms of legalistic standards of scrupulous external conformity to the law. (CSB)

The Pharisees developed their own system of laws based on the Law of Moses. Paul claimed to keep these laws perfectly (Jesus denounced the; Mt 23:23) (TLSB)

A Jew by birth, and a Pharisee by choice, he had particularly obligated himself to keep the Law. In this he was animated with such zeal that he persecuted the Church, the Christians. So he could lay claim to righteousness, though this was all only of an outward nature. Yet as far as it went, he was without blame. All this he can truthfully say of his past. Yet now he can see and

say that all this was no ground for boasting, rather he considers it a tremendous loss. Therefore now he turns from playful irony to a solemn seriousness. Therefore he now describes what he possesses as a Christian and what he has found in Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

3:7–14 Paul's confidence in Christ. (CSB)

3:7 BUT – “Alla” indicates that he was not in earnest when he boasted about his past. His supposed gain was in reality a great loss. He came to see that all his righteousness had no value in the sight of God whatsoever. (Stoeckhardt)

whatever. The things mentioned in vv. 5–6. (CSB)

profit ... loss. The great reversal in Paul—begun on the road to Damascus (see Ac 9:3–16)—from being self-centered to being centered in Christ. (CSB)

The Greek word is *zemia* which means damage or disadvantage. Paul realized that confidence in his heritage and works actually interfered with knowing God. The Formula of Concord says, “If anyone wants to drag good works into the article of Justification, rest his righteousness or trust for salvation on them, and merit God's grace and be saved by them, St Paul himself answers, not us. He says and repeats it three times (Phil 3:7-8) – such a person's works are not only useless and a hindrance, but are also harmful. This is not the fault of the good works themselves, but of the false confidence placed in the works, contrary to God's clear Word FC SD IV 37). (TLSB)

3:8 CONSIDER – *ageomai* – To weigh the options thoughtfully. Paul no longer considers his past training and positions of any value. (QV)

SURPASSING GREATNESS – *hperechon* – He saw the complete divine grace and splendor of Christ. (QV)

knowing Christ Jesus. Not only a knowledge of facts but a knowledge gained through experience that, in its surpassing greatness, transforms the entire person. The following verses spell this out. (CSB)

Simply knowing Jesus exceeded all else. (TLSB)

ALL – The emphasis is on “all.” Not only what the Apostle has just mentioned, but also other fine things on which the world prides itself, he deems worthless trash. (Stoeckhardt)

rubbish. What Paul now has as a Christian is not merely preferable or a better alternative; in contrast, his former way of life was worthless and despicable. (CSB)

Human waste or dung (TLSB)

GAIN CHRIST – Clinging only to Christ, one enjoys all the benefits of Christ. (TLSB)

3:9 *be found in him.* Union with Christ (see note on 2:1; cf. 1Co 1:30)—not simply an experience in the past, but a present, continuing relationship. (CSB)

In contrast to what we gain by our own labor or effort. (TLSB)

righteousness ... from the law. See note on v. 6. (CSB)

The righteousness gained by one's keeping of the Law fails and ceases. And to come to realize that is a gain. (Stoeckhardt)

righteousness ... by faith. A principal benefit of union with Christ (see Ro 3:21–22; 1Co 1:30; Gal 2:16). (CSB)

Same Greek root as “justify.” The Formula of Concord states, “The word “justify” here means to declare righteous and free from sins and to absolve a person from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is credited by God to faith (FC SD III 17). (TLSB)

The righteousness gained through faith in Christ, rather, is the only true righteousness. This righteousness is “from God.” It is recognized as righteousness by God. As one believes in Jesus Christ as one's Savior and Lord, so one has part in His redemption, and so one appropriates His merits, and receives a perfect righteousness, which is approved of God. (Stoeckhardt)

3:10-11 Paul is talking about living a real life of faith rooted in the death and resurrection wrought for us in Baptism. See note, Rm 6:4. Luth: “Everywhere he teaches about the slaying of the old man and the renewing of the inner man” (AE 29:225). (TLSB)

3:10 *know Christ.*† As in v. 8, this knowledge is not merely factual; it includes the experience of the power of his resurrection (see Eph 1:17–20), of fellowship in his sufferings (cf. Ac 9:16) and of being like him in his death (see 2Co 4:7–12; 12:9–10). Believers already share in Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Ro 6:2–13; Gal 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Eph 2:6; Col 2:12–13; 3:1). In v. 10, however, Paul speaks of the actual experience of Christ's resurrection power and of suffering with and for him, even to the point of death. (CSB)

POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION – Christ's resurrection makes our faith and resurrection possible. God has given you an eternal, living soul and will raise your body from the dead. (TLSB)

SHARING IN HIS SUFFERINGS – He who believes in Christ also enters into “the fellowship of His sufferings.” He who believes must also suffer with Christ. Yet also that is gain. (Stoeckhardt)

The greatest of all honors: to share in the suffering that is required to accomplish tasks of the most fundamental and eternal importance. (TLSB)

LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH – A Christian, as the name is meant to indicate, will follow the pattern of Jesus, laying down his or her life for others. (TLSB)

3:11 *somehow.* Not an indication of doubt or uncertainty, but of intense concern and involvement. (CSB)

resurrection. The great personal anticipation of every believer (see Da 12:2; Jn 5:29; Ac 24:15; 1Co 15:23; 1Th 4:16). (CSB)

To be included with those who are raised to life everlasting in a perfected state (1Jn 3:1–3). (TLSB)

The resurrection of the dead is the hope of every Christian. Whoever believes has now already that new life. And in and with Christ he passes through suffering and death on to the resurrection of the dead, which means for him the beginning of eternal life. (Stoekhardt)

3:1–11 Paul reflects on his heritage and contrasts its value with the blessing of knowing Jesus, who sets us free to invest our lives in the lives of others. Only the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has the power to truly set us free to experience life to the fullest. • Dear Lord Jesus, by Your grace You set me free to live in Your righteousness and in Your image. Loosen my grip on earthly advantage, and take my hand in Yours. Amen. (TLSB)

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

3:12 -21 By his own example the Apostle would incite Christians to strive for holiness, that heavenly jewel, and warns against certain ways which lead to destruction. (Stoekhardt)

3:12–14 The Christian life is like a race; elsewhere Paul uses athletic imagery in a similar way (1Co 9:24–27; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 4:7–8; cf. Mt 24:13; Heb 12:1). (CSB)

3:12 ALREADY OBTAINED – Just before the Apostle spoke of the resurrection, including its end and aim: eternal life. That is very obviously the object of “obtain.” When one comes to faith he is immediately and completely justified, and so eternal life becomes his own. (Stoekhardt)

When believers are brought to faith, they become possessors of eternal life. As long as they are in the world, they are like people who hold title to property in a distant land. The title makes the property theirs, but the owners are not yet physically in possession of what rightfully belongs to them. Similarly believers, though they are possessors of eternal life by faith and have the righteousness of Christ, are still also sinners living in a sinful world. They have not yet arrived at the full, physical possession of the perfection of eternal life. So, perhaps in response to the boastful claims of the Judaizers or others who taught that believers by their works could achieve perfection already here on earth, Paul in this section vividly describes the Christian life as a constant straining forward toward the great goal and prize of eternal life that God’s grace holds out to believers in Christ. (PBC)

take hold ... took hold of me. Paul’s goal is Christ’s goal for him, and Christ supplies the resources for him to “press on toward the goal” (v. 14; cf. 2:12–13). (CSB)

Same Gk term. Christ “obtained” Paul so that Paul might also obtain the life of Christ as his own (v 10). (TLSB)

MADE PERFECT – It can also mean complete, having realized the purpose for which he was created. (TLSB)

PRESS ON – dioko – To hasten towards the goal. (QV)

When Paul wrote these verses, he had been a Christian for many years. During those years he had grown in knowledge of Christ and in conformity to Christ. He had become a revered apostle and had experienced the fellowship of sharing in Christ’s sufferings. Most recently he had suffered the loss of his personal freedom for the sake of Christ, but that did not mean that he had “arrived” spiritually or reached the goal of perfection. Paul was still living in a sinful world. He was still a sinner, still troubled by the weaknesses and failings of his sinful nature. Though he was a child of God by faith, he had not yet arrived at the point where he could perfectly and uninterruptedly serve God or enjoy the fullness of the blessings God had in store for him. That would have to wait until he entered heaven. Meanwhile he lived his life as a Christian in a constant striving for holiness. He pressed on toward perfection. (PBC)

What Paul says of his own life here is an important key to viewing our own. As long as we are here on earth, we sinners will not reach perfection. That will come only in heaven’s glory. Nevertheless, our Christian lives of growing in Christ and living for him ought to be a constant striving for perfection, with the goal and prize of eternal life kept ever before our eyes of faith. (PBC)

TO TAKE HOLD – Refers to the life that shares in Christ’s suffering and resurrection. (TLSB)

3:13-14 We strain against our own sinful nature and against the world and the devil, even while our soul is at peace under God’s promises and grace. (TLSB)

3:13 **DO NOT CONSIDER** – He has but one goal to strive for and only one direction to turn to, as he “presses on.” (Stoeckhardt)

Forgetting. Not losing all memory of his sinful past (see vv. 4–6), but leaving it behind him as done with and settled. (CSB)

Looking back while running ahead is a dangerous procedure for the athlete in a race. It can only result in a loss of speed and direction. (tug of war and straight rope) It can only result in a loss of speed and direction. In the race of his Christian life the apostle did not look back either. He did not look back with pride on past accomplishments which he knew could not earn him anything in God’s sight. Nor did he look back in regretful brooding over past sins which had been washed away by Jesus’ blood. With each new day he put forth every effort to press ahead, to grow in his Christian living and service to Christ. The long distance runner strains and stretches every muscle, expanding even more energy, if at all possible, as he draws closer to the finish line. Similarly, Paul was expanding all the energy he possessed as a Christian,

straining with all his spiritual might as he drew ever closer to the goal and the prize of eternal life. (PBC)

Luke 9:62, “Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

What the Apostle does forget is the old, sinful way of life, which dominated him up till the point of his conversion. This old way of life he must forget in such a way that he denies the way of his sinful flesh daily and continually. One must press forward, goal-ward, looking toward the distant mark. (Stoeckhardt)

STRAINING – It means “giving it his utmost.” TEV (Good News for Modern Man) reads: “I do my best to reach etc.” Like the Olympic runner who gives it his all. Some think that Paul is forgetting the items mentioned in vs. 4-7. Others think that it is more than this, like Romans 7:14-24. It is both. A Christian forgets all his sins and imperfections because Christ has forgiven them. He looks ahead only. A runner who constantly looks back is in danger of losing the race. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The Greek and Roman worlds of the apostle’s day shared our American fascination for sports. Archaeologists have unearthed ancient stadia as well equipped as many of our own. Paul uses the picture of the determined runner/athlete here in these verses to illustrate the intense yearning and striving for spiritual perfection that should characterize all believers as they “run the race” of their Christian lives. Success in athletic competition depends not only on ability and conditioning, but also on an athlete’s mental state. Concentration is the key. Overconfidence, lack of mental alertness or “mental toughness” can cost an athlete dearly. (GBP – 15-1 & qb comment – Few champions repeat) (PBC)

Spiritual dullness, overconfidence and lack of concentration can likewise cost Christians. Recall how Paul urged the Philippians in chapter 2:12 never to stop working at their salvation. The apostle is saying basically the same thing here in a slightly different way. The Christian who does not concentrate on living the kind of life to which God calls him may, like the overconfident athlete, be eliminated from the race and in the end lose the blessings God has in store for him. A believer’s sanctification, that is, his life as a Christian in this world, will be perfect. The struggle against sin and the devil must be carried on as long as the Christian is in this world. Neither Paul nor any other Christian can ever afford a lack of concentration of think that the race is as good as run and won. (PBC)

3:14 I PRESSED ON – The prize of victory is everlasting life. It is described as the prize “of the calling of God in Christ Jesus from above.” Already when Christians were called this prize was set before them. This calling is described as being from above. It comes from above, from God, and it calls upward. The prize, this wreath of victory, lies there all ready and complete, won by Christ for all Christians. (Stoeckhardt)

Jesus said that those who believed in Him were begotten from above (Jn 1:12–13). Paul commands us to set our minds on things above (Col 3:1). God draws us through His Word

toward the way of life that He intends for us, a life with purpose and meaning that endures. (TLSB)

prize. The winner of the Greek races received a wreath of leaves and sometimes a cash award; the Christian receives an award of everlasting glory. (CSB)

The prize is awarded the winner at the games. The point of comparison is the strenuous effort both for the athlete and for the Christian. At Romans 8:37 Paul said: “we are more than conquerors.” In athletics only one person or one team wins. In Christianity all win. By the way, the root word for “prize” is derived, means “umpire.” In Christianity all win. [Special Olympics – leader went back and helped someone who had fallen] God has already judged in Paul’s favor. That is a wonderful thought. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

heavenward. Paul’s ultimate aspirations are found not in this life but in heaven, because Christ is there (see Col 3:1–2). (CSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 20:9-20

⁹ He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. ¹⁰ At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. ¹² He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. ¹³ “Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’ ¹⁴ “But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. “What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When the people heard this, they said, “May this never be!” ¹⁷ Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” ¹⁹ The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

In each of the previous two major sections of the gospel there have been programmatic pericopes that set the tone for the whole section. (CC p. 761)

In his Galilean ministry (4:14–9:50), Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth (4:16–30) sets the agenda for what is to follow; in Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:28), his commission of the seventy (-two) (10:1–24) shows that the journey will be catechetical. Both his Nazareth sermon and the commissioning of the seventy (-two) occur at the beginning of these major sections and summarize the major themes of that section: a prophetic Christology of teaching, miracles, rejection, and a commissioning to continue this prophetic ministry. (CC p. 761)

Now that Jesus has arrived at Jerusalem (19:29–40), lamented over her (19:41–44), cleansed the temple (19:45–46), begun his teaching (19:47–48), and rebuffed a questioning of his authority (20:1–8), he tells a parable that is programmatic not only for his Jerusalem teaching (19:47–21:38), but also for his passion (22:1–23:56a), resurrection, and ascension (23:56b–24:53), that is, *for the rest of the gospel* and also for the church (Acts) until his second coming. This parable prophesies his rejection and exaltation within the context of salvation history and includes what is to come as the climax of God’s plan of salvation. It looks back on God’s prophetic intervention in the OT. It is spoken to the people—the faithful remnant (see comments on λαός at 1:68, 77; 7:29; 18:43)—and also within the hearing of the Jewish religious establishment (who understand that it is directed against them [20:19]). As such it will serve to remind *all Israel* of God’s comprehensive program for their redemption. (CC p. 761)

After an introduction (20:9a), the straightforward narration of the parable (20:9b–15a) is followed by an interpretation (20:15b–18) and an application to one group among the hearers (20:19). (CC p. 761)

20:9-15 The owner is God, the vineyard is Israel, the tenants are the religious leaders, the servants are the prophets, and the beloved son is Jesus. The parable’s background fits absentee landlord arrangements of the first century. The point is not the vineyard’s productivity but the caretaker’s actions. (TLSB)

20:9 TELL THE PEOPLE – The same audience of hearers continues from 20:1–8, i.e., the receptive people (τὸν λαόν) *and* the chief priests, scribes, and elders (the constituency of the Sanhedrin). But Jesus addresses the parable only to *the people*. The religious leaders, though not mentioned explicitly, also hear, for they later acknowledge that the parable was spoken against them (20:19). The “people” who hear this parable (20:9a) represent the same “people,” who for the most part, hear and believe Jesus’ teaching (1:68, 77; 7:29; 18:43). The religious establishment fears these “people” when the parable is over (20:19). Yet to come is the “hour” of the religious leaders, who wield “the power/authority of darkness” in the “hour” of Jesus’ passion (22:53). (CC P. 761)

PLANTED VINEYARD – ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα—In the OT, a vineyard often represented Israel. (E.g., Is 5:1–7; 27:2; Jer 2:21; Ezek 19:10–14; Hos 10:1–4; Ps 80:8–13). (CC p. 759)

RENTED IT TO SOME FARMERS – God leased it to Jewish religious establishment, namely, the Sadducees and chief priest in charge of the public ministry in Jerusalem. (CC p. 762)

WENT AWAY – ἀπεδήμησεν—The idea of the master embarking on a long journey is found also in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14, with this same verb) and in the parable of the minas (Lk 19:12). (CC p. 759)

The parable is allegorical and describes the history of Israel in the same way as the song of the vineyard (Is 5:1–7). God is the Lord of the vineyard, which he has leased to tenants, the Jewish religious establishment, namely, the Sadducees and chief priests in charge of the public temple ministry in Jerusalem and the Pharisees and scribes who govern the peoples’ piety outside

Jerusalem. The hearer will note that the chief priests, the scribes, and the foremost of the people (the Sanhedrin) were seeking to destroy Jesus but were reluctant to do so because the people were carefully listening to Jesus' teaching (19:47). The previous teaching of Jesus has fully developed the prophet Christology (see the excursus "Luke's Prophet Christology"), which has prepared for this parable.

E.g., Jesus' rejection in Nazareth as the Prophet who comes teaching and healing to set creation free from its bondage (4:16–30); the woes against the Pharisees and scribes concerning the persecution and death of the prophets (11:47–53); and the culmination of this prophetic rejection in Jesus, who must die in Jerusalem like all the prophets before him (13:31–35). (CC p. 762)

This parable is about the rejection of God's emissaries to Israel, which culminates in the rejection of God's beloved Son. (CC pp. 761-762)

20:10 AT HARVEST TIME – To collect the rent at harvest. (TLSB)

he sent a servant. This parable (v. 9) is reminiscent of Isa 5:1–7. The servants who were sent to the tenants represent the prophets God sent in former times who were rejected (see Ne 9:26; Jer 7:25–26; 25:4–7; Mt 23:34; Ac 7:52; Heb 11:36–38). (CSB)

The first four stanzas (20:9b–12) retell the history of God's work through the prophets for the salvation of Israel. Every time God sent a prophet to Israel, it created a "critical time," a "right season" (καιρῶ; 20:10), because prophets speak for God. They declare his salvific intentions and his judgment upon those who reject him. God supports their preaching through miraculous deeds. The hearer will note that Jesus has just wept over Jerusalem "because you did not know the appointed time of your visitation" (τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς σου). He will also remember that Jesus exhorted the crowds "to examine this critical time" (καιρόν; 12:56). Now this parable tests the ability of the people and the religious establishment to discern whether the "critical time" is upon them in the life and ministry of Jesus. Are they able to see that Jesus is speaking this parable about his own rejection in Jerusalem? Will the parable's indictment of their participation in that rejection lead them to repentance? *The critical time is now*, in this final week in Jerusalem, where Jesus is destined to die. (CC p. 762)

δοῦλον – Three slaves represent the OT prophets and can be compared to the three servants in 19:16-23. (CC p. 760)

The three slaves who are sent into the vineyard are not to be identified as three specific prophets. They simply represent God's prophetic activity during the OT era, when the prophets called people to repentance and to show fruits of repentance, but when that call fell so often on deaf ears. (Cf. 1 Ki 19:10, 14; Jer 7:25–26; 25:4; Ezek 2:3–7) Certainly the hearer will recall how John the Baptist was the final prophet of the OT period who called the people to repentance (3:3) and to bear fruits of repentance (3:8). The first fruit of repentance these religious leaders should have shown was submission to John's baptism, which the hearer knows they have not done (7:30). The slaves come with requests from the Lord of the vineyard, who desires fruits of repentance, but the slaves are beaten and sent away (20:10); beaten, treated shamefully, and

sent away (20:11); and wounded and thrown out (20:12). In the words of Is 5:7, “He looked for justice, and behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!” John prepared the way of the Lord, as did all the prophets who led up to him. The preparatory catechesis is over; now it is time for God’s own Son to visit the vineyard. But the abuse suffered by all God’s servants will fall upon his Servant: “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell upon me” (Rom 15:3, quoting LXX Ps 68:10 [MT69:10; ET 69:9]). It is the hour for the Son to be killed. (CC pp. 762-763)

give him some of the fruit. In accordance with a kind of sharecropping agreement, a fixed amount was due the landowner. At the proper time he would expect to receive his share. (CSB)

BEAT HIM – Symbolizes Israel’s rejection of the prophets. (TLSB)

20:11 SENT ANOTHER SERVANT – Note God’s patience. (TLSB)

TREATED SHAMEFULLY – They added insult to the violence. (TLSB)

20:12 Crescendo of abuse. (TLSB)

20:13 OWNER OF THE VINEYARD – ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος—“The Lord of the vineyard” calls to mind Is 5:7, where “the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel.” (CC p. 760)

my son, whom I love. The specific reference to the beloved son makes clearer the intended application of the son in the parable to the Son, Jesus Christ (see 3:22; Mt 17:5). (CSB)

Jesus (cf 3:22; 9:35), God’s last and most gracious attempt to win over His people. (TLSB)

τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν—“The beloved” stands in apposition to “my son.” Both phrases allude to Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration. See comments at 3:22 and 9:35. (CC p. 760)

20:14 TALKED THE MATTER OVER – διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους—This is a durative imperfect which suggests that their decision was not immediate but came after a lengthy period of deliberation. The end result of such deliberation by Jesus’ opponents is always evil. See the similar use of this verb in a parable in 12:17, and see the textual note and comments at 5:21–22. (CC p. 760)

inheritance will be ours. See note on Mk 12:7. (CSB)

Because the son/heir would be dead. They failed to reckon with any subsequent action by the owner. (TLSB)

ὁ κληρονόμος—This also recalls Isaac, who is both the beloved son and the heir (Gen 21:10). (Cf. Rom 4:13–14; 8:17; Gal 3:29; 4:1, 7, 30; Heb 1:2; 6:17; 11:7)

20:15 THREW HIM OUT OF THE VINEYARD AND KILLED HIM – Jesus’ crucifixion outside Jerusalem. (TLSB)

καὶ ἐκβαλόντες αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος ἀπέκτειναν—Mk 12:8 has a different order: “And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.” Luke’s order preserves a possible reference to Jesus’ crucifixion outside the city walls (cf. Jn 19:17; Heb 13:12–13). Cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 306; R. Stein, *Luke*, 493; for an opposing opinion see I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 731; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1284–85; and J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 952. (CC P. 760)

See comments at 10:24 on the seventy (-two) being sent out as sacrificial lambs. The hearer would also know that Stephen’s martyrdom took place “outside the city” (Acts 7:58). (CC p. 760)

And that is exactly what happens when the Lord of the vineyard sends his Son, the beloved. In the “beloved Son” there are echoes from both the OT era and the ministry of Jesus. The near sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham’s beloved son, foreshadowed Christ’s bloody sacrifice (Gen 22:2, 12, 16 [LXX]) But the most significant echoes are from the gospel itself. This is the Son of whom the Father said at his baptism, “You are my Son, the beloved, in you I am well pleased” (3:22). The Father repeated this in similar language at the transfiguration: “This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him!” (9:35). The beloved Son first was baptized in the waters of the Jordan and then received his anointing by the Spirit to carry out the plan of the Trinity; now the same beloved Son, the heir, will undergo the “bloody baptism” of the cross outside the vineyard (see the excursus “Baptism in Luke-Acts”). “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Heb 13:11–12). (CC p. 763)

WHAT THEN WILL THE OWNER DO – Jesus shatters the assumption of the owner’s permanent absence. (TLSB)

τί οὖν ποιήσει αὐτοῖς ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος—Jesus asks the same question concerning the Lord of the vineyard that the Lord of the vineyard himself asked (Lk. 20:13). Structurally, this is not part of the parable but is the beginning of Jesus’ interpretation. (CC p. 760)

The meaning of the parable is clear. Jesus is talking about himself! But at this point, he breaks off the parable and interprets the significance of his own death for salvation history. He begins with a question: “What, therefore, shall the Lord of the vineyard do to them?” (τί οὖν ποιήσει; 20:15b). This question rephrases the earlier question the Lord of the vineyard put to himself (τί ποιήσω; 20:13). Luke uses a similar expression at 3:10, 14; 10:25; 12:17; 16:4; 18:18 (cf. 15:17–19), and more importantly, there is also a link to Is 5:4 (LXX) where God asks, “What more shall I do [τί ποιήσω] for my vineyard that I have not done in it?” The answer in Isaiah is clear: the fruitless vineyard that has become a thicket of thorns must be destroyed (5:5–6). Equally clear is Jesus’ answer to his own question: “He will come and destroy these farmers and will give the vineyard to others” (Lk 20:16). The hearer of Jesus’ words know that Jesus was weeping over the city of Jerusalem and prophesying its destruction in A.D. 70, when the Jewish religious establishment would come to an end (19:41–44). The hearer also knows that, after Pentecost, the vineyard will not be *leased* to new farmers but will be *given* to them (Lk 12:32). These new farmers do not include the previous abusive tenants. They begin with the

twelve apostles who, through their commission (9:1–6; 22:21–38), reconstitute the church as the new Israel. (CC p. 763)

20:16 *give the vineyard to others.* See note on Mt 21:41. (CSB)

Not the old religious establishment (cf Ac 13:46–47). (TLSB)

HE WILL COME...WILL DESTROY...WILL GIVE – ἐλεύσεται ... ἀπολέσει ... δώσει—The three future tenses indicate that Jesus’ interpretation will have a future application. (CC p. 760)

MAY THIS NEVER BE – Expression used frequently by Paul, but only here in the Gospels. (TLSB)

μὴ γένοιτο—This is the only place in the gospels where this expression occurs. (It occurs thirteen times in the Pauline corpus.) It reflects the Hebrew הֲלִיִּן, which sometimes is used by people who are not entirely sincere (e.g., Gen 44:7, 17). (CC p. 760)

The people’s response is fear. “Let it not happen” (20:16) probably refers to all three events: the killing of the Son, the killing of the farmers, and the transfer of the vineyard to others. But it must happen, for the inexorable plan of God calls for his eschatological prophet to die in Jerusalem. (CC p. 764)

20:17 IS WRITTEN – Jesus cites Ps 118:22 in speaking of the Messiah’s rejection, but He also points to the resurrection. The events of the next few days will answer His question. (TLSB)

τὸ γεγραμμένον τοῦτο—This is Luke’s unique formula for introducing an OT citation (cf. 18:31; 21:22; 22:37; 24:44). (CC p. 760)

Jesus looks at (ἐμβλέψας) the people to communicate nonverbally that these words are *for them*. His eyes see what lies ahead for himself and its meaning for them. Jesus looked upon his disciples just before the Sermon on the Plain for the same reason (6:20): he was about to tell *them* how God’s blessing paradoxically comes through suffering—his own suffering on their behalf. They would be joined to him, and their cruciform lives would imitate his. Jesus, the chief catechist, looks with enlightened eyes at the crowds because he knows the end of the story and the meaning of the Scriptures (24:25–27, 44–49). But do they? He asks them in the form of a question, “What, therefore, is this that is written, ‘The stone that the builders rejected [ἀπεδοκίμασαν], this has become the head of the corner’?” (20:17). Jesus gives no answer, because the events of his life in the next few days will provide the answer. The people and the Jewish religious establishment already have had the answer for a long time in the Scriptures. After the resurrection, Jesus will chide the Emmaus disciples as “foolish and slow in heart to believe in all the things that the prophets spoke” (24:25). They should have known that according to Moses and all the prophets, it was “necessary that the Christ suffer these things and enter into his glory” (24:26). (CC p. 764)

REJECTED – ἀπεδοκίμασαν—This is the same word used in the first prediction of Jesus’ passion (Lk 9:22). (CC p. 760)

the capstone. See note on Ps 118:22. (CSB)

Jesus, rejected by official Israel, is exalted by God, who builds His Church on Jesus as the “Church’s one foundation” (LSB 644:1). (TLSB)

λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας—Luke does not include the next verse (Ps 118:23), which both Matthew (21:42) and Mark (12:11) have: “This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” (CC p. 760)

The people who heard Jesus’ words and the community that received them as gospel easily identified the stone as Jesus and the builders as the leaders of the Jewish religious establishment (cf. Peter’s use of Ps 118:22 at Acts 4:11). Jesus uses the psalms to support his upcoming rejection by the Sanhedrin. And Jesus links this foreshadowing of his own death with his first prediction of his passion by using the same word, ἀποδοκιμάζω, “reject,” to describe the Son of Man’s rejection by the Sanhedrin (representing “the elders and chief priests and scribes”; 9:22). Up until his Galilean prediction, Luke used the language of rejection to describe Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem, because this is what must happen to all prophets, especially God’s final, eschatological prophet (see the excursus “Luke’s Prophet Christology”). However, the rejection of this Prophet is different. What is so extraordinary about Jesus’ imminent crucifixion is that *his rejection is the means by which he will become the cornerstone* and is therefore a reference to his glory. This is the culmination of the Great Reversal theme that runs through Luke (see comments on 1:46–55): the stone’s rejection by the builders is the stone’s exaltation as the head of the corner. (CC p. 764)

J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1282, describes the “head of the corner”: “*Kephale gonias*, lit. ‘(the) head of (the) corner,’ designated in antiquity the stone used at a building’s corner to bear the weight or stress of the two walls. It would have functioned somewhat like a ‘keystone’ or ‘capstone’ in an arch or other architectural form. It was the stone which was essential or crucial to the whole structure.” See also R. Stein, *Luke*, 493; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 732; and J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 953. (CC p. 764)

God’s glory is manifested in the rejection of God’s Son. This also affirms what Jesus predicted in his first passion prediction, that the Son of Man will “on the third day be raised” (9:22). The theme of the Great Reversal first appeared in the Magnificat (1:52–53) and has reappeared throughout the gospel (13:30; 14:11; 18:14). Jesus himself is the icon of reversal (cf. Phil 2:5–11). Note again the order of suffering before glory in Jesus’ revealing question to his disciples: “Was it not necessary that the Christ *suffer* these things *and enter into his glory*?” (24:26). (CC p. 765)

At the very beginning of the gospel, Simeon predicted: “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against” (2:34). Throughout the ministry of Jesus, the hearer has watched this come true as those whom one would most expect to receive Jesus (the religious leaders who knew the prophecies of the OT [7:30]) reject him instead, while those who seem least likely to believe that Jesus was bringing God’s kingdom (the tax collectors and sinners [7:29]) receive him in faith. To accent this irony, Jesus restates the consequences for those who strike the stone, that is, Jesus himself. Jesus and the kingdom he brings—a kingdom that reverses the values and wisdom of the world—will become a

stumbling block to some (“everyone who falls on that stone will be dashed to pieces”) and to others a destructive meteor (“on whomsoever it falls, it will crush him”; 20:18). (CC p. 765)

Most commentators also note a close correspondence to a saying from the rabbis in *Midrash Esther* 3:6: “If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot! If the pot falls on the stone, woe to the pot! Either way, woe to the pot!” See R. Stein, *Luke*, 493–94; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 732; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1286; C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 189; and J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 953. (CC p. 765)

20:18 *will be broken to pieces.* As a pot dashed against a stone is broken, and as one lying beneath a falling stone is crushed, so those who reject Jesus the Messiah will be doomed (see Isa 8:14; cf. Da 2:34–35, 44; Lk 2:34). (CSB)

Jesus uses OT imagery to speak of the inevitable judgment. The image of the stone is twofold: one may stumble over it or be crushed by it. All who reject Christ will feel its sharpness and pain. (TLSB)

Everyone will be broken or crushed. Those who believe in him, disciples, must fall into the brokenness of repentance in order to be raised again as new beings, living stones in Christ, the temple of God. But upon unbelievers comes the crushing blow of judgment. The hearer would recall that Jesus had just prophesied that “they will dash you to the ground and your children in you, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone within you, because you did not know the appointed time of your visitation” (19:44), a reference to the stones of the buildings in Jerusalem that crushed inhabitants in the destruction of the city in A.D. 70. Those who stumble over Jesus will receive the judgment precipitated by rejection of him, and when the stone falls on them they will be utterly crushed.

Perhaps Jesus is also recalling another passage from Isaiah: “And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many in them [the two houses] shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and captured” (Is 8:14–15; cf. also Dan 2:34–35, 44–45). (CC p. 765)

The hearer knows that Jesus’ crucifixion will become the ultimate stumbling block, as St. Paul relates to the Corinthians: “We preach Christ crucified—a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23) and to the Romans: “They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall; and he who believes in him will not be put to shame’ ” (Rom 9:32–33, citing Is 28:16 and 8:14; cf. 1 Pet 2:8). (CC pp. 765-766)

20:19 *teachers of the law.* The “scribes.” For their opposition to Jesus see 5:30; 9:22; 19:47; 22:2; 23:10. (CSB)

Some of the same opponents as in 19:47. (TLSB)

οἱ γραμματεῖς—These scribes are leaders of the Pharisees and represent the Pharisaic party on the Sanhedrin (see the excursus “The Opponents of Jesus in Luke”). (CC p. 760)

LOOKED FOR A WAY TO ARREST HIM – They cannot because, again, the people support Jesus (cf 18:43; 20:6). (TLSB)

From the moment Jesus entered the holy city of Jerusalem, the scribes and chief priests were seeking an opportunity to seize him. His teaching in the temple—*particularly this parable*—confirmed how dangerous Jesus was for them and how important it was to “lay hands on him” (20:19). But they were equally aware that many believed his teaching, and they were afraid to arrest Jesus because of how the people might react (cf. 19:48). More importantly, these religious leaders were fully aware that Jesus told this parable against them. They saw their fleeting place in Jesus’ reading of salvation history. They even may have been aware that Jesus’ reading was in accordance with the Scriptures. Jesus spoke the parable as a warning call to repentance and faith in him who would become the “head of the corner” (20:17). In the posture of unbelief and rejection, the parable’s application to them was Law (20:16, 18). (CC p. 766)

20:9–18 By parable and psalm, Jesus warns against rejecting the Messiah. God’s mission in Christ will succeed; we reject it at our great peril. Despite all opposition, God will build His Church on the crucified and resurrected Jesus. • O God, grant that we may always build our heavenly hope on the one sure cornerstone You have provided, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

²⁰ Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.

Israel will be guilty of killing him and that after his rejection and death he will be exalted and avenged. And the parable ends with the evangelist recording that “the scribes and the chief priests were seeking to lay hands on him in that very hour, but they feared the people, for they knew that he spoke this parable against them” (20:19). Thus, at this point in Jesus’ teaching in the temple, he has claimed that his authority is from God, pointing to his ministry and that of John the Baptist to support this fact. Jesus then narrated a climactic parable that describes *in symbolic language* what will take place in the coming week. He has pushed his antagonists to the point of no return. The hearer knows that Jesus’ opponents are members of the leading council in Israel, the Sanhedrin, made up of chief priests (Sadducees), scribes (Pharisees), and elders. As the narrative unfolds, they will become key players in Jesus’ passion, trials, and death. The hearer might think that there is little left for Jesus to do but proceed to his death, and the parable of the workers in the vineyard could lead directly to Jesus’ passion. (CC p. 770)

But Luke includes two extended discourses of Jesus before the passion narrative begins at 22:1. These discourses are important for understanding Jesus’ passion. The first discourse is related to the theme of Jesus’ teaching that began at 20:1, “conflict with the religious establishment in the temple.” It is the final section of controversy in the gospel, and it is shaped by the evangelist to accent some of his key themes in Luke-Acts. These discussions with the religious establishment of Jerusalem (20:20–21:4) include Jesus’ brief reflection on the widow’s mite (21:1–4), which is more closely related to his discussion with the Sadducees and scribes

than to his final extended discourse, whose theme is “sayings and signs of the end times” (21:5–38). (CC p. 771)

20:20-26 In these five sections, it is important to be mindful of the protagonist and antagonist(s). Even though the Pharisees are not mentioned by name, *these discussions are really against them*. The scribes are *Pharisaic scribes* (see the excursus “The Opponents of Jesus in Luke”), and it is important for Jesus to respond to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by warning them and by instructing his disciples not to fall into the same sin. Jesus charged the lawyers (part of the Pharisaic block) with the most serious offense: they “took away the key of knowledge” (11:52) from the people. This “key” is “the key of David” (Is 22:22; Rev 3:7), who is the Messiah; he exercises the office of the keys himself (Is 22:22; Rev 1:18) and through his apostles (Mt 16:19). The Pharisees know from the Scriptures the truth concerning the Messiah. But they abused the key by locking the kingdom instead of opening it: “You yourselves did not enter in, and those entering in you prevented” (Lk 11:52). This entire section began with a remarkable display of hypocrisy when the Sanhedrin feigned ignorance concerning the origins of John the Baptist’s authority (20:7). Now the section concludes with comments by Jesus aimed at their teachings, which shut people out from the way of salvation. Jesus’ temple teaching repeats *in a new way* the same teachings against the scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers that are recorded in Luke 11–12. (CC p. 771)

20:20 THEY SENT – ἀπέστειλαν—No subject is given in this passage for those who sent the spies. The nearest logical antecedent is the scribes and chief priests in the previous verse, who knew that Jesus spoke the parable of the workers in the vineyard against them. This makes sense, for both the Sadducees (chief priests) and scribes are Jesus’ chief antagonists in 20:20–47. (CC p. 768)

SPIES – ἐγκαθέτους—BAGD gives “hired to lie in wait” for this rare and colorful word, citing Josephus, *War* 2.27 (2.2.5); 6.286 (6.5.2), and Job 31:9. (CC p. 768)

Luke provides an introduction (20:20) that sets the tone for the entire discussion (20:20–21:4). The “spies” sent by the Sanhedrin resemble Pharisees as depicted earlier: the Sanhedrin is “watching closely” (παρατηρέω; 20:20), the same word used of similar activity by scribes and Pharisees at 6:7 and Pharisees at 14:1. Luke describes the spies as “hypocritically pretending themselves to be righteous” (ὑποκρινομένους ἑαυτοὺς δικαίους εἶναι), using a verbal form related to the noun for “hypocrisy” (cf. 12:1). The phrase is reminiscent of previous descriptions of the Pharisees at 16:15 and 18:9–12. The intent of the spies also suggests the nefarious plans of the Pharisees and recalls earlier plans (6:11; 11:53–54; 19:47): they want “to deliver [παραδοῦναι] him to the rule and the authority of the governor” (20:20). Jesus had revealed their secret intent in parabolic form in 20:9–19. The governor (τοῦ ἡγεμόνος) is Pontius Pilate. He has already appeared in the narrative at 13:1 as the ruthless ruler who ordered his soldiers into the temple to kill the Galileans. (CC pp. 771-772)

HOPE TO CATCH – ἐπιλάβωνται—In the sense of “catch, ensnare,” the verb takes a double genitive: “to capture someone in or by means of something” (cf. BAGD 2 a). The verb occurs again in 20:26 with a similar double genitive. (CC p. 768)

HAND HIM OVER – παραδῶναι—This is part of Luke’s vocabulary of betrayal. It occurs in a result clause (ὥστε with the infinitive) to express the intentions of the religious authorities. The active voice here indicates that the scribes and chief priests are now actively fulfilling the plan of God by seeking Jesus’ death. See comments on previous passives at 9:43b–45. (Cf. A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 121–27.) (CC p. 768)

authority of the governor. Fearing to take action themselves, the Jewish religious leaders hoped to draw from Jesus some statement that would bring action from the Roman officials and remove him from his contact with the people. (CSB)

Unable to overcome Jesus by themselves, they turn to the Romans’ power. (TLSB)