

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

Micah 6:1-8

The Indictment of the LORD

Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. 2 Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. 3 “O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

6:1–16 This chapter depicts a courtroom scene in which the Lord lodges a legal complaint against Israel. In vv. 1–2 the Lord summons the people to listen to his accusation and to prepare their defense against the charges that follow in vv. 9–16. The Lord speaks in vv. 3–5, poignantly reminding the people of his gracious acts in their behalf. In vv. 6–7 Israel is speaking, and in v. 8 Micah responds directly to the nation, answering the questions of vv. 6–7. God charges the people with specific wrongs in vv. 9–16. (CSB)

6:1–2 *mountains ... foundations of the earth.* Inanimate objects were called on as third-party witnesses because of their enduring nature and because they were witnesses to his covenant. (CSB)

The mountains and hills, having stood during the time of Israel's entire history, could witness to the facts which were here brought out. (Kretzmann)

Mount Sinai saw the Lord enter into a covenant relationship with Israel (EX 19:1-7). Through thousands of worship services on Mt. Zion the Savior drew near to His people and drew them near to Him. And the many hills in ancient Canaan blushed with shame as they watched faithless Israel practicing idolatry on their very summits (1 Kings 14:23) (PBC)

6:1 *Hear.* Micah turned his vision away from the future (chs 4–5) and directed the people to hear what God had to say to them (1:2; 6:2, 9). (TLSB)

plead your case before the mountains. The Lord put Israel on trial and called on the mountains to be the jury. (TLSB)

6:2 *Israel.* Primarily Judah here. (CSB)

indictment. The Lord, as plaintiff, charged Israel with failure to do what He required (v 8). (TLSB)

the Lord has an indictment against his people – The defendants could never be exonerated, except by God's own gracious intervention in His covenant and its promises, sealed and fulfilled in Christ.

6:3 *My people.* Indicative of a tender rebuke (see also v. 5). (CSB)

Although the Israelites had forfeited His love and mercy by repeatedly breaking His covenant, the Lord still called them “my people.” He refused to turn His back on them. He simply couldn't. He loved them.

They were His covenant people. From them in the fullness of time the promised Messiah would come. But just because He cared for them, He had to bring charges against them, that they might be convicted and in penitence return to Him. (PBC)

what have I done...how have I wearied you – The Lord’s questions ironically suggested that possibly He was at fault for Israel’s failures. (TLSB)

6:4-5 The Lord reminded His people of four specific examples of His saving acts: He (1) redeemed them from Egypt; (2) provided excellent leaders; (3) guarded from harm; (4) led them into the Promised Land. (TLSB)

6:5 *Balak ... Balaam.* See Nu 22–24. (CSB)

Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, but the Lord forced him to bless Israel instead (Nu 22–24). (TLSB)

As the Israelites drew near to their promised homeland, King Balak of Moab tried to harm Israel by hiring the heathen prophet Balaam to curse them. The Lord, however, commanded Balaam to bless the Israelites – four times in fact, and the one time he even proclaimed a Messianic prophecy. (Numbers 22-24). According to His promise to protect His people, the Lord had delivered them from the hands of evil men like Balak and Balaam. (PBC)

Shittim to Gilgal. See Jos 3:1; 4:19. (CSB)

Locations on the eastern and western sides of the Jordan River, which Israel crossed to enter Canaan (Jsh 3:1; 4:19). (TLSB)

Shittim lay east of Jericho, across the Jordan River. It was Israel’s last camping place before crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan. Here the people had committed sexual sins with the Moabites and had joined in their idolatry. Although the Lord punished them for these sins, He had not rejected them. When the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River and set up camp at Gilgal, between the Jordan and Jericho, they knew that at last they were home. The Lord had brought His people home, into the Promised Land, just as He had promised. (PBC)

6:1–5 The Lord’s indictment of Israel is based on the evidence of His saving acts. Yet by their sins, the people acted as though serving the Lord wearied them. When we think and speak as though God wants to rob us of joy in life, we treat God as our oppressor. We forget His saving acts on our behalf: creation, redemption, and sanctification. The Lord comes to us in His Word, calling us to repentance. The Holy Spirit moves us to confess our sins and trust Jesus for pardon and renewal. • Father, thank You for the love You have shown me in Your Son. By the leading of Your Holy Spirit, may I live each day recalling the great things You have done for me. Amen. (TLSB)

What Does the LORD Require?

6 “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? **7** Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” **8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

6:6-8 Character of the offerings goes from common to extraordinary to absurd. Some interpreters have argued from this passage that Israelite offerings originally included child sacrifice, commonly practiced by other nations. However, such an interpretation fails to appreciate the prophet's rhetoric. (TLSB)

6:6 The same thought is expressed in 1Sa 15:22; Ps 51:16; Hos 6:6; Isa 1:11–15 (see note there). Micah does not deny the desirability of sacrifices but shows that it does no good to offer them without obedience. (CSB)

with what shall I come – In response to the Lord's indictment, an individual asks what the Lord requires. The four questions, in ascending scale of value, refer to some ritual performance. (TLSB)

bow. Synonymous with worship toward God (Ex 4:31; 34:8; Ps 95:6; 1Sm 1:28) or respect and service for a human being (Gn 33:3; 43:26–28; 1Sm 20:41; 28:14; Est 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex 20:4–5). People also bowed to (1) greet someone (Gn 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezr 9:5; 10:1), and (3) express thanks (Gn 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1Ch 29:20; 1Ki 18:42; Ne 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one's face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (cf Gn 33:3). (TLSB p. 1276)

calves a year old? Burnt offering prescribed by God's law (Lv 9:3). (TLSB)

6:7 *thousands of rams* – They still thought they could earn God's good will. They were willing to bargain with God as though He were one of their own corrupt judges who could be bribed to overlook their failings. (PBC)

When King Solomon dedicated the temple, countless animals were sacrificed (1Ki 8:5, 63). (TLSB)

rivers of oil? Oil was poured on grain offerings (Lv 2:1). (TLSB)

I give my firstborn – The sacrifice of children practiced by ancient heathen peoples, especially by the Moabites and the Phoenicians (2 Kings 3:27). Those Israelites like wicked Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and godless Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) who resorted to human sacrifice were following the practice of the heathen. (PBC)

Israel was forbidden to sacrifice children (Dt 18:10), something their heathen neighbors did (2Ki 21:6). (TLSB)

6:8 *man*. The use of the singular makes the accusation personal, though Micah is speaking to all Israel (see also Dt 10:12–13). (CSB)

Micah directs each individual to the Word, where the Lord tells what He requires. (TLSB)

do justice...love kindness. The kind of obedience God expects from his covenant people. (CSB)

To be fair and honest. (TLSB)

This can be done when a right relationship is had with God and which has been initiated by God through the sacrifice of his son. Then we can act according to God's standards of justice as laid down in his law. Worshipping God alone and not idols, trusting in him alone and not in weapons or in man is acting justly toward God. Acting justly to one's fellowman is showing him no injustice or cruelty in word or deed but treating him like himself. (PBC)

love kindness – It's God's mercy that had and continues to have for us by forgiving our sins by the unselfish love of Jesus. (PBC)

Hbr *chesed*, emphasizes a love that is loyal and steadfast. (TLSB)

Philippians 2:1-2 “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Walk humbly – Recognize that we bring nothing to God that takes care of our sins. But unless we realize that these requirements of God's law are impossible for the unregenerate to fulfill, we are actually promoting a religion of work-righteousness. Faith gives the reason and gospel gives us the strength to love the Lord our God above all else and our neighbor as ourselves. (PBC)

To be modest and reverential, always conscious of one's dependence on the Lord. Luther: “God requires no good works from us for Himself; He wants everything to yield to the use and welfare of our neighbor. The glory of such works is enough for God. Faith is the beginning of justification, as all Scripture reveals. Being justified by faith, we neither can nor should offer anything to God other than the sacrifice of praise; that is, that we bear witness with our preaching of the grace we have received, that we magnify God, that we preach His glory, and do this preaching through the Gospel. These are the ‘fruits of our lips,’ Hos. 14:2. Then let us show mercy to our neighbor” (AE 18:261). (TLSB)

Philippians 2:3-4 ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

6:6–8 The Lord has clearly revealed in His Word what He requires of us. Our problem is not a failure to know but a failure to do. We “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rm 3:23). God showed His steadfast love for us by the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. We are “justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rm 3:24). The Holy Spirit leads redeemed sinners to walk in justice, kindness, and humility. • Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world. Grant us peace and love toward our neighbors. Amen. (TLSB)

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Christ the Wisdom and Power of God

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that

are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1:18-31 In the cultural context, one ought to remember that many early Christians were slaves or lower-class people. The critic Celsus observed of the Christians: “The following are the rules laid down by them. Let no one come to us who has been instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By which words, acknowledging that such individuals are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children” (Origen, “Contra Celsum,” *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872], 125, book 3, ch 44). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

C. K. Barrett (in *A Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper and Row, 1968], 61) informs readers that the citation of Jer 9:24 in v 31 is taken from the Haphtorah (in Jewish synagogue usage in Paul’s day, a prophetic reading that followed the Torah) for Ab 9, and that we might suppose Paul cites it as a “text for his sermon” for that day. In light of the citation, this whole text becomes a reminder of the sort of boasting God rebukes and the sort of boasting he commends. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:18 *words of the cross* – Key note for the Letter. “The Gospel ... preaches righteousness and gives the Spirit” (FC SD V 22). (TLSB)

Paul has been arguing that reliance on one’s skill as a speaker can rob the cross of Christ of its power. He now sets out to cure the Corinthians of their fascination with rhetoric. After all, they should know that no matter how well they dress up the word of the cross, the world will always find it unpalatable. For the world marches to a different drummer. Its enthusiasm always is for whatever seems attractive and successful. Its basic orientation is toward what has aptly been called “the theology of glory.” But now, in opposition to the world’s lust for glamour, success, and “image,” Paul sets forth “the word [the theology] of the cross” (1:18–25). Only that sobering word will provide the Corinthians with a basis for overcoming their divisions and restoring their fellowship in Christ. (CC p. 64)

“The Theology of Glory” and “The Theology of the Cross”

These expressions derive from Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation of 1518. In thesis 20, for example, Luther cites 1 Cor 1:21, 25, and continues: “It is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise. ... For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ.” He adds, then, in thesis 21: “God can be found only in suffering and the cross. ... It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God’s.” The *power* of God is visible in creation (Rom 1:18–32), but the *grace* of God can only be found in God’s Word and Sacraments, on the cross and in the Supper, which to the world appear weak and foolish. (CC pp. 64-65)

is folly – μωρία—The English word “moron” is derived from μωρός. (CC p. 62)

The Corinthians need to be realistic that “the word of the cross” will always be “foolishness to those who are being destroyed” (1 Cor 1:18). In itself, of course, the Gospel is not foolishness; only to those who are being destroyed is it foolishness. The world will always think Christians are wasting their time. There was a period when even Jesus’ mother and brothers thought he was “beside himself” (Mk 3:21). Many of his

Jewish opponents claimed that he was insane (Jn 10:20). Later the Roman governor Festus charged Paul with insanity: “You are out of your mind, Paul! ... Too much learning is driving you insane!” (Acts 26:24). Through the centuries the message of the cross has drawn similar abuse from Christianity’s cultured and less-cultured despisers. In their view, Christians “are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19). (CC p. 65)

So long has the cross been a centerpiece in churches that Christians can easily forget the shame and offensiveness it represented in the ancient world. Only criminals and recalcitrant slaves were crucified. Indeed, Matthew’s gospel portrays Jesus’ death as that of a slave worth thirty pieces of silver (Mt 26:15; cf. Ex 21:32), and Paul draws a connection between Jesus’ taking the form of a slave (μορφήν δούλου) and dying the death of the cross (Phil 2:7–8). In short, as has been well said, “to assert that God himself accepted death in the form of a crucified Jewish manual worker from Galilee in order to break the power of death and bring salvation to all men could only seem folly and madness to men of ancient times.” (CC p. 65)

The cross of Christ is the action of God for us and our salvation (2 Cor 5:18-19). Its power (Rom 1:16-17) is not visible to empirical observations. It meets neither the demands nor the expectations of natural man. Seekers are not drawn to the cross; in fact, the cross is repugnant to unregenerate man and drives him away. Yet its power is at work in the Gospel call. Through the Gospel the Spirit overcomes our natural resistance and brings us to faith in Christ crucified. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

to those who are perishing – Those who see only foolishness in the cross deny its power to save them from eternal destruction. (TLSB)

τοῖς μὲν ἀπολλυμένοις ... τοῖς δὲ σωζομένοις—In the middle voice ἀπόλλυμι means “perish, die,” especially “of eternal death” (BAGD 2 a α). English versions usually treat its participle as middle: “those who are perishing” (NRSV, NKJV, NIV). There are no NT passages where the verb is unambiguously passive. However, the parallelism with τοῖς σωζομένοις, which definitely is passive (“those who are being saved,” not the middle “those who are saving themselves”), suggests that here τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις is also passive: “those who are being destroyed [by God].” The passive sense is confirmed by its echo in 1:19, where God is the subject of the active verb: “I will destroy [ἀπολώ] the wisdom of the wise.” (CC p. 61)

Both of the participles are in the present tense, and they derive their temporal sense from the present tense main verb, ἐστίν, which indicates that some are now in the process of being destroyed, while others are now being saved and are already on the way that will finally lead to their eternal salvation. For Paul, σωτηρία is mostly an eschatological term. Again, as in 1:7–8, the Last Day is in view. (CC p. 61)

power of God – The cross is the instrument of God’s salvation. (TLSB)

On the other hand, “to us who are being saved it [the word of the cross] is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Note that despite the divisions he has just deplored, Paul does not classify the Corinthians among those being lost. The words “to us” assure them that they and he are united as the blessed recipients of salvation. For them, as for him, the word of the cross is a “fragrance from life to life” (2 Cor 2:16). (CC pp. 65-66)

According to Pauline theology, believers are surrounded by salvation—past, present, and future. Having been saved by grace in the past (Eph 2:5, 8; cf. Rom 8:24; Titus 3:5), they are now day by day in the process of being saved (1 Cor 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor 2:15), a process which continues until they are finally saved on the last day (Rom 5:9; 11:26). Above all, it is this sure hope of rescue from God’s wrath on the Last Day which lends the words “save” and “salvation” their color. (CC p. 66)

Our salvation is accomplished by “the power of God” effective in “the word of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18). The voice of the Gospel is not foolishness, but “the power of God for salvation” (Rom 1:16). Thus Paul’s ministry was “a demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor 2:4). Through his preaching, God established his kingdom “in power” (4:20). Hence Paul was not interested in how well his spiritually “inflated” opponents could talk, but in their power (4:19). While outwardly he and his coworkers appeared to be weak, he rejoiced in weakness and blessed God when there was no more room for self-reliance (2 Cor 1:8–9), for then he knew the power of Christ would rest on him (2 Cor 12:9–10; 13:4). (CC p. 66)

1:19 This quote speaks against people who “draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me” (Is 29:13). (TLSB)

The quote from Is 29:14 reminds readers of Judah’s humanly wise but spiritually foolish policy of alliance with Egypt when Assyrian invasion loomed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

I will destroy – ἀπολῶ—1 Cor 1:19 quotes LXX Is 29:14 exactly, except for the last word (see the next textual note, on ἀθετήσω). The verb ἀπολῶ, “I will destroy,” echoes the participle in 1:18, τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, “those who are being destroyed.” The plan God announced in Isaiah’s day to destroy the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the understanding is being carried out now wherever the “foolishness” of the Gospel is preached, including Corinth. (CC p. 62)

the wise. Aristides said that on every street in Corinth one met a so-called wise man, who had his own solutions to the world’s problems. (CSB)

The Lord foils mankind’s “vast intelligence” and grandiose plans (Gen 11:1-9; Psalms 2; 33:10). The quote in this passage is from Is. 29:14 and refers to the people of Hezekiah’s day whose worship was insincere and “made up of rules taught by men” (Is. 29:13). Unless enlightened by God’s Word, human “wisdom” is foolishness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

I will thwart – ἀθετήσω—Paul’s source in LXX Is 29:14 has the verb κρύψω, “I will conceal.” (CC p. 62)

BAGD, 1 a, opts for “thwart, confound” as the best translation for ἀθετέω in 1 Cor 1:19. However, the stronger verb “reject” (BAGD, 1 b) more accurately renders the sense of the verb not only here but throughout the NT (cf., e.g., Mk 6:26; 7:9; Lk 10:16). In the LXX ἀθετέω frequently means “to rebel against, to want to have nothing to do with someone” (e.g., 4 Kingdoms 18:7 [MT/ET 2 Ki 18:7]; 2 Chr 10:19). On the Last Day God will publicly repudiate the wisdom of the wise and reject those who were captivated by it. He will also claim as his own those who instead believed the foolish word of the cross. (CC p. 62)

1:20 *who is wise*. Probably a reference to Gentile philosophers in general. (CSB)

Jewish scribes and Greek philosophers sought wisdom through debate, but they are “of this age,” in contrast to God’s timeless wisdom. (TLSB)

“Where is the one who is wise?” Aristides said that one met a so-called wise man who had his own solution to the world’s problems on every street in Corinth (*Concordia Self-Study Bible* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], 1748). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Although Paul may no longer be formally quoting the OT, we still hear the voice of Isaiah in the series of rhetorical questions which mock the wisdom of this age (1:20). The first two questions Paul draws directly from Isaiah, whom he has just cited and will cite another five times in the epistle. That “splendid and highly enlightened prophet” also had a keen sense for the difference between reliance on human strength and wisdom, and a quiet reliance on God (e.g., Is 7:4; 25:9; 26:3–4; 30:15). (CC p. 67)

scribe. Probably the Jewish teacher of the law (see note on Mt 2:4). (CSB)

The first three questions all begin with the interrogative “where” (ποῦ). In its original context in Isaiah, the first question (“where is a wise man?”) mocks the wise counselors of Pharaoh for their failure to foresee the divine judgments coming upon Egypt (Is 19:12). The second question from the prophet (“where is a scribe?”) targets foreign scribes, men of strange speech, who would tally tribute levied on Israel (Is 33:18). The third question (“where is a debater of this age?”) is Paul’s own free formulation, targeting anyone who raises arguments against the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor 10:4–5). (CC p. 67)

Adapting Isaiah to his own day, Paul’s first target is probably the typical sage of Greek culture, the philosopher or rhetorician, while the second object of his mockery, the “scribe,” is the Jewish rabbi, and the “debater of this age” is any clever person opposed to the true knowledge of God. Although some think this analysis is too subtle, it suits the context which goes on to speak of Jews and Greeks (1 Cor 1:22). What seems especially clear is that the second question refers to Jewish teachers of the Law. The Greeks never referred to a scholar as a “scribe” (γραμματεὺς); they used that word for a civil officer like the “town clerk” of Acts 19:35. (CC p. 67)

debater of this age. Probably refers to the Greek sophists, who engaged in long and subtle disputes. (CSB)

οὗ αἰῶνος τούτου—The phrase ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος occurs eight times in Paul (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6 (twice); 2:8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 1:21). “This [present] age” is characterized by sin (Gal 1:4) and transience (cf. Paul’s use of the parallel expression τοῦ κόσμου τούτου in 1 Cor 7:31). It stands in contrast to the coming age (Eph 1:21; 2:7; cf. the rabbinic contrast between “this age,” הַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, and “the age to come,” הַעוֹלָם הַבָּא). According to Paul’s apocalyptic outlook, “the new aeon has begun already, though as yet concealed from the eyes of men, in and with the resurrection of Christ, inasmuch as this is the beginning of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).” Thus the new aeon overlaps the old. (CC pp. 62-63)

Paul now sets out to demonstrate what he has just asserted by means of his rhetorical questions. His argument and terminology anticipate his epistle to the Romans, 1:18–22 (cf. “knowing God,” “claiming to be wise,” “being made foolish,” Rom 1:21–22). (CC p. 68)

Even more, they echo Jesus’ words of thanksgiving to the Father in Mt 11:25–26: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things [insight into the person and work of Christ] from *the wise and understanding* [cf. 1 Cor 1:19] and revealed them to babies. Yes, Father, for this was your *gracious will* [εὐδοκία, corresponding to εὐδόκησεν in 1 Cor 1:21].” Thus Paul underscores what both Isaiah and his Lord had said about the way God surprises the world by rejecting its values and elevating what it despises. For centuries Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis had been engaged in the quest to know God. “Through ... wisdom” (1 Cor 1:21) the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers had sought to understand the structure of the universe, and Socrates and his successors had tried to understand human beings in relation to their world. But with all their intellectual ingenuity they had missed the mark. Meanwhile, the rabbis had

busied themselves with the minute study of Torah, but over their hearts lay a veil which is only removed when a person turns to the Lord (2 Cor 3:15). (CC p. 68)

God made foolish the wisdom of the world. All humanly devised philosophical systems end in meaninglessness because they have a wrong concept of God and his revelation. (CSB)

1:21 Human wisdom cannot lead to God, who reveals Himself in the message of the cross. “The forgiveness of sins ... cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How would we know about it otherwise?” (LC V 31). (TLSB)

foolish the wisdom. Jesus expresses a similar thought in Lk 10:21. It is God’s intention that worldly wisdom should not be the means of knowing him. (CSB)

folly...we preach. Not that preaching is foolish, but that the message being preached (Christ crucified) is viewed by the world as foolish. (CSB)

Because of the folly of human thinking about how to attain the knowledge of God, it was God’s gracious and sovereign decision to lead people to the right knowledge of himself by that most unimpressive means, “the silliness of preaching” (1 Cor 1:21). By “preaching” (κήρυγμα) Paul does not mean merely the act of preaching; he constantly bears in mind its content, the cross of Christ (1:18). As he goes on to say (1:23), “we preach Christ crucified.” (CC pp. 68-69)

All the wisdom coming from the teachers, philosophers, and sophists of the day is meaningless since they are not properly focused on God. Have their wisdom and intellect saved one soul? Have their teachings and philosophies forgiven one sin? (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

We dare not lull ourselves into believing that the struggle of men against Scripture and the Christian religion with its appeal to reason (science) will ever cease, since “the natural man” (1 Cor 2:14) is God’s enemy (Rom 8:7) and can only regard what is the essence of Christianity, the Gospel, as foolishness (“they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them.” 1 Cor. 2:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

1:22-23 These verses are a clear demonstration of the situation in which Gospel proclamation always finds itself in this world! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:22 signs – Judaism sought miraculous confirmation as God’s support for messenger and message. (TLSB)

The Jews asked Jesus to perform signs (Matt 12:38; 16:1–4). They wanted miraculous displays of divine strength, proving that Jesus was the Messiah. When Paul wrote this letter (A.D. 55 or 56), there was a large crop of false messiahs. In A.D. 45, a man called Theudas persuaded thousands of Jews to abandon their homes and follow him out to the Jordan. He promised he would divide the water and they could walk through on dry land. In A.D. 54, another messiah persuaded 30,000 people to follow him to the Mount of Olives. He promised that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The demand for signs (as Israel did in the wilderness) or wisdom is a manifestation of humanity’s rebellion against God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The devil tempted Jesus to perform self-serving miracles (Matt 4:1–11). People also asked Jesus to perform signs (Luke 23:8–12; John 2:18), but he insisted that the only sign to be given them was that of Jonah, whose three-day interment in the fish and subsequent life were types of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection (Matt 12:38–40; 16:1–4; cf. John 2:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Nonbelievers, on the other hand, set up themselves as the arbiters of truth. “Man,” they believe, “is the measure of all things.” Thus they demand to be convinced by evidence that falls within the parameters of their own experience. This nonbelieving world is classified by Paul into two groups, Jews and Greeks. What they had in common was a quest for impressive signs of outward success, whether that be a display of power (like the plagues against Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the raining down of bread from heaven, or the ejecting of the Romans from Palestine; compare modern demands for health and wealth) or a brilliant show of intellectual prowess. The Jews, for example, constantly demanded that Jesus give them a powerful sign from heaven to prove his messianic claims (Mt 12:38; 16:1; Lk 23:8; Jn 2:23; 6:30). Otherwise they would not believe (Jn 4:48). In response, Jesus told them: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights” (Mt 12:39–40). In other words, when the Jews demanded a sign, Jesus pointed to his death and resurrection. Of course, to those with eyes to see, the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles were powerful confirmations of the word of the cross. But those miracles were always gracious gifts; they were never performed on demand. (CC p. 69)

Greeks seek wisdom. True of Greeks in general, but especially of the Greek philosophers. (CSB)

The Gk for “philosophy” means “love of wisdom.” (TLSB)

The Greeks on their part looked for wisdom. The Greek historian Herodotus had said of them: “All Greeks were zealous for every kind of learning.” Paul could speak from firsthand experience, having encountered the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:18). But we should not think only of the Greeks of Corinth and Athens. From the parallel “Gentiles” in 1 Cor 1:23, we see that Paul uses the word “Greeks” to include all non-Jewish peoples of the Roman Empire, where the influence of the Greek language and culture was widespread (cf. Rom 1:16). (CC p. 69)

The present active form shows a habitual action and describes what they are always doing. The Greeks expected to be reasoned and argued into a salvation that they find rationally acceptable. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

Paul contrasts human wisdom with God’s wisdom. English words such as *sophist*, *sophomore* (an oxymoron), and *philosophy* contain the same Greek root as *sophia*, “wisdom.” In classical Greek, the word could denote manual skills and artistic talent; acquaintance and familiarity with something; sound judgment and practical intelligence; philosophical wisdom of the type attributed to Plato and Aristotle; and in an evil sense, craftiness and cunning (Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1889] 737). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

During the NT era, there were a variety of philosophical schools, including the Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, and Epicureans, all of whom were active in Athens (John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986] 122–23). Each of these philosophical schools claimed to possess the ethical wisdom that was the key to life. Paul had dialogued with the Greeks at Athens (Acts 17:16–34) where they spent their time discussing new ideas, so he was familiar with the Greek quest for wisdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

1:23 *but we* – ἡμεῖς—The pronoun is emphatic. Paul is contrasting the activity of Jews and Greeks with what “we [apostles]” are doing. (CC p. 63)

Christ crucified. See 2:2. (CSB)

The Jews expected a Messiah (Hbr for “Christ”), but did not expect that He should be crucified. (TLSB)

Paul refers to his practice of preaching only Christ crucified. Paul’s initial trip to Corinth is narrated in Acts 18:1–18, and he describes how he preached to them in 1 Cor 2:1–2. For an excellent description of the history of the practice of crucifixion and the scandal it represented in the ancient world, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). The Greeks and Romans reserved crucifixion as a method of capital punishment for the most heinous crimes committed by slaves and despicable criminals, and the cross connoted utmost disgrace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Preaching obtains its power from what is preached. To believe on one who was crucified and to expect from such a one salvation, that seems to the natural man the height of folly. (Stoeckhardt)

The Hellenistic philosophical schools also generally held the physical and the body in low esteem, and considered the good and the divine to exist in the realm of the spiritual. To them it was silly to speak of God becoming incarnate in a human body. It is said that Augustine, who was a great scholar long before he became a Christian, claimed that he could find parallels among the Greeks for almost all the teachings of Christianity, but he never found anything like the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). To believe that a man could rise from the dead was also foolishness to Greeks. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

stumbling block to Jews.† They expected a triumphant, political Messiah (Ac 1:6), not a crucified one. Also, the teaching that deity became incarnate and died was repugnant to them. (CSB)

Gk *skandalon*, a cause for offense and rejection, as in Eng “scandal.” (TLSB)

skanedalon. A “scandal”; a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare* (figuratively *cause* of displeasure or sin):—occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling-block. (QV)

“To Jews” a crucified Messiah was “a stumbling block” (1 Cor 1:23), “an obstacle in coming to faith.” While there was a great diversity of messianic expectations among first-century Jews, those expectations consistently were for a *powerful* figure. Moreover, anyone who had been crucified was repugnant, having been cursed by God (Deut 21:22–23; cf. Gal 3:13). For Jews, then, the cross was the most shameful death imaginable (Heb 12:2). In debating with Jews, the early Christian apologists had to devote considerable attention to why Israel’s Messiah had to be crucified. (CC p. 70)

The Jews, in contrast, knew from the OT instances of bodily resurrection (1 Ki 17:7–24; 2 Ki 4:8–37; 13:21; cf. Ezek 37:1–14). They also knew of God’s long history of dwelling among his people and making his grace available through physical means (the tabernacle, temple, animal sacrifices, circumcision, Passover, etc.). The concepts of incarnation and resurrection were familiar to Jews (though the Sadducees rejected the idea of resurrection, as many liberal Jews do today). But they looked for a Savior who would effect political as well as religious liberation, and in their estimation Jesus failed in this respect. Anyone who was crucified was under the curse of God (Deut 21:23), and most did not understand that the Messiah took on this curse for our sake (Gal 3:13–14). Even though several prominent OT texts clearly depict the Messiah as suffering (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; etc), these passages played little role in the

theology of most of the Jewish sects of the first century A.D. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

This draws to the mind of the original hearers/readers the stick an animal stumbles over, causing the trap to shut. The Jews would see the crucifixion of the Messiah as a stumbling block because anyone killed on a cross was cursed. It was scandalous to think that their God was executed as a criminal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

Expecting a victorious and military human messiah, the Jews for the most part would not accept a crucified messiah, even more problematic was the claim that the Almighty Creator would deign to become incarnate. But the greatest problem for the Jews was the message of the Gospel itself. For the Good News of free forgiveness through Jesus contradicted the very core of their self righteous religiosity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

folly to Gentiles.† Greeks and Romans were sure that no reputable person would be crucified, so it was unthinkable that a crucified criminal could be the Savior. Also, the claim of Jesus’ resurrection was considered foolishness by the Gentiles. (CSB)

The Greeks certainly found it untenable to have an innocent and reputable person – much less a god be crucified. And the thought of Christ’s blood being shed to forgive their sins was utterly repulsive and against all earthly wisdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

1:24 are called – Paul terms the Corinthian Christians “called” also in 1:2, where he associates the term with their being “sanctified” and “holy” (*hēgiasmenois . . . klētois hagiois*). The Jews thought of themselves as the holy people, chosen by God, and they based their hope of salvation on that fact. But many of them did not continue in the faith God revealed to his chosen OT people. Peter applies the prominent OT terms for God’s people to believers in Christ (1 Pet 2:9). Similar to OT believers, Christians base their hope of salvation on the fact that they have been called by God in baptism (1:13–16), chosen, and justified by God’s grace in Christ. They are called into fellowship with Christ (1:9). The ones called are the ones who “are being saved” (1:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

power. See Ro 1:4, 16; Mk 12:24. (CSB)

dunamis - force (literally or figuratively); specifically miraculous *power* (usually by implication a *miracle* itself):—ability, abundance, meaning, might (- ily, -y, -y deed), (worker of) miracle (-s), power, strength, violence, mighty (wonderful) work. – Dynamite

Christ is the power of God for salvation. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and as such he possesses all the power of God, even though he chose not to employ his power fully during his earthly life of humiliation. Rom 1:4 may be interpreted as saying that Jesus was declared to be “the Son of God with power” by his resurrection (see NIV note); it was his resurrection which proved that “all authority in heaven and on earth” had been given to him (Matt 28:18). In Rom 1:18, the Gospel is called the “power of God” which brings salvation. This is the type of power Paul is emphasizing in 1 Cor 1:22–25: not power over creation (First Article of the Creed) or brute force (God’s left-hand rule of Law), but God’s power to save (Second Article of the Creed). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

wisdom. See v. 30. The crucified Christ is the power that saves and the wisdom that transforms seeming folly into ultimate and highest discernment. (CSB)

Christ is also the wisdom of God. Through the foolishness of Christ crucified, “righteousness, holiness and redemption” are ours (1:30). This kind of wisdom is acquired not through human reason or strenuous intellectual exercises of the type practiced by some Greek philosophical schools, but only through simple, trusting faith in Christ crucified. It is hidden from those who are wise by the world’s standards, but “revealed to little children” (Luke 10:21). There is a rich tradition of wisdom literature in the OT. The wisdom of God revealed in the OT is incarnate in Christ. Prov 8:22–31 in particular describes the hypostasis of God’s wisdom in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

1:25 foolishness of God – God’s ways appear foolish to those who do not understand them (cf Is 55:8). (TLSB)

τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ... τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ—Literally, “the foolish thing of God ... the weak thing of God.” Cf. the Living Bible: “This so-called ‘foolish’ plan of God.” Paul uses substantivized neuter adjectives with the article instead of the normal feminine abstract nouns for “foolishness” (μωρία) and “weakness” (ἀσθένεια). See BDF, § 263 (2). Hays explains: “This foolish and weak thing is the event of the cross itself.” (CC p. 64)

What the Greeks considered foolishness by their human standards is in fact wiser than all their philosophy and mythology, since it alone is able to make wise to salvation. Moreover, the crucified Christ, whom the Jews considered the epitome of weakness since he did not perform any powerful miracle for them, nor was he able to save himself from the cross, is really God’s power of salvation. This is a classic exposition of the theology of the cross and refutation of the theology of glory. Natural man expects to find God in visible displays of power and glory which appeal to human reason, but through this search man finds only the angry God of Law. Paradoxically, the grace of God is found only in the foolishness of a weak man crucified on a cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Romans 11:33-36, “³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

1:26–31 The Corinthian Christians themselves were living proof that salvation does not depend on anything in man, so that when someone is saved, he must boast in the Lord (v. 31). (CSB)

1:26 were wise according to worldly standards – God works salvation through a cross and the preaching of a crucified Savior. This salvation was worked in you despite who you were! Your vocation demonstrates it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

Paul turns the spotlight on the Corinthians themselves as Exhibit A of the wisdom of God. “*Blepete gar tēn klēsin humōn*” invites a careful look at themselves. (*Blepete gar tēn klēsin humōn* is explanatory.) The three groupings are representative of what humans normally boast about: *sophoi, dunatoi, eugeneis* are “the educated, the influential, the people of distinguished family” according to Hans Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], 50). The repeated reminder “not many of you” (three times!) forces the listeners to admit they are a motley crew, humanly speaking. Who can read this without thinking of himself personally? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

If the Corinthian Christians needed evidence that the people who count in this world hold the message of the cross to be folly and weakness, they needed only to look about the. How many wise by human standards, how many influential, how many of noble birth in Corinth were members of their congregation? Not many. Erastus, the director of public works in Corinth, was one of the few. But the

leading citizens in Corinth shunned this group of Christians. The men of wealth, the city fathers, the merchant princes, the scholars, the first families of the city would have nothing to do with this crazy religion a traveling Jew was peddling in Corinth. (PBC)

The pagan philosopher, Celsus, who lived in the second century after Christ, expressed the view of prominent Jews and Greeks when he wrote that a glance at the membership of Christian congregations in his day would prove that the Christians “show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.” The German philosopher Nietzsche (whom Hitler admired) condemned the Christian faith as “a favoring of the botched and degenerate, and a despising of the rich, scholarly, noble, healthy, and strong.” (PBC)

How many of the people who control the press and television in our country, how many leading entertainers, how many industrial magnates, how many noted scholars are simple, believing church-going Christians? There are some, but they are few indeed. Paul’s judgment is still true. (PBC)

Life responsibilities, vocation. (TLSB)

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

Third Article – *What does this mean?* I believe that I cannot by my own reason of strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Not many were wise – With his “no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible,” Celsus has of course misrepresented Paul’s “not many” (1:26). (CC p. 76)

worldly standards – The mind, limited by earthly considerations, makes inappropriate judgments. (TLSB)

were powerful – *dunatoi* – powerful or those who had clout.

Of noble birth – Though some may have acquired wealth and authority, they were not of high rank in society. (TLSB)

But the majority of converts in places like Rome and Corinth had humble origins. Many were either slaves or freed slaves (cf. 1 Cor 7:21–23). To some extent this is apparent from their names. The lowly origin of many Christians provoked the scorn of the second-century philosopher Celsus: Their injunctions are like this: “Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.” By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and children. (CC)

1:27-28 Look at the verbs Paul chooses to describe God’s response to human boasting: *kataischunēi* (“shame”) and *katargēsēi* (“bring to nothing”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:27 *but* – *alla* – quite to the contrary. Strongest of emphasis. (QV)

shame the strong – The foolish, weak, and despised bring down and prohibit the boasting of the wise, strong, and esteemed. (TLSB)

1:28 *despised in the world* – Worthless things, nobodies. (TLSB)

τὰ ἐξουμνημένα—ἐξουθενέω, “I despise, disdain,” equals ἐξουδενέω, “I regard as οὐδέν [nothing].” Cf. 1 Cor 6:4; 16:11. (CC p. 74)

bring to nothing – God renders something nothing, and brings from nothing something. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

1:29 Not a single bit of flesh can boast before God. You have nothing but what was given. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

God’s standards are the genuine basis of judgment. (TLSB)

God’s action is brought to bear so that not a single human being (*pasa sarx* is emphatic) may boast in himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Romans 3:27-28 “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”

1:30 *because of him ... you are in Christ*. It is God who has called you to union and communion with Christ. (CSB)

Our life, spiritual and physical, comes from God. (TLSB)

He is the reason you are in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

The expression *ex autou* is translated “he is the source of” in the ESV and RSV, “because of him” in the NIV, “by His doing” in the NASB. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

who became to us wisdom – Paul traces from God (1) revelation given in His Word, (2) the acquittal won by His Son, (3) the holiness that follows for us, and (4) full salvation from sin and death. “This happens because of the righteousness of another, namely, of Christ” (Ap V 184). (TLSB)

righteousness.† It is through faith in Christ that we are justified (declared righteous); see Ro 5:19. (CSB)

Paul then explains what this wisdom-treasure consists of: “righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1:30). The first part of the wisdom gift comes to us in the form of Christ’s righteousness. Jeremiah had recorded the messianic promise that the days were coming when God would raise up for David a righteous Branch called “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer 23:5–6; cf. Is 45:24). In ourselves, of

course, we are sinners, but the righteousness of the spotless Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7) has been imputed to us and covers our sins. For “God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:18, 21; Phil 3:9). (CC p. 78)

Jeremiah 23:6 “In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin^a for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

sanctification. The second part of the gift is “sanctification” or holiness (1 Cor 1:30 cf. 6:11, where again sanctification is linked to justification). God’s holiness is “an expression for His perfection of being which transcends everything creaturely” and sinful. Sinful humans cannot stand in his holy presence. But in his suprahuman love (Hos 11:8–9) God graciously provided the means—the covenant and sacrifices of the OT, and the perfect sacrifice of Christ—by which our guilt is taken away and our sin atoned for (Is 6:1–7). Holy Baptism (1 Cor 12:13) is now one of the most important means by which Christ’s holiness (ἁγιασμός, 1:30) is conveyed to us, for it is by the washing of water in the word that he sanctifies (ἁγιάζω) the church (Eph 5:26). Again, nothing is “of us” (τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν—“this is not your doing”—Eph 2:8); all is of God, in Christ Jesus. Someone else’s holiness is conferred on us. Only “in and through Christ ... Christians are ‘called to be saints’ [1 Cor 1:2] and washed clean of sin [6:11].” We are then called to live as saints. Pfitzner amplifies: “He is our sanctification in two senses. It is in and through Christ that Christians are ‘called to be saints’ and washed clean of sin. ... Again further growth in holiness can come only after the destruction of all human claims to goodness, only as the saints live the new life in Christ Jesus.” (CC p. 79)

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

redemption. In Christ our righteousness, holiness, and redemption are a done deal. No even sanctification is my doing in any way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

1 Corinthians 1:30 “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

1:31 *as it is written* – ἵνα καθὼς γέγραπται—Literally, “in order that as has been written.” There is an ellipsis in the clause. Paul has omitted a verb like γένηται, “in order that *it might come about* as has been written.” (CC p. 75)

let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord – All gifts in v 30 are from God; therefore, all pride in ourselves is excluded. Though Jesus’ death appears shameful and foolish, it is the only basis of our salvation. “We cannot boast of many merits and works, if they are viewed apart from grace and mercy” (SA III XIII 3). (TLSB)

Paul paraphrases Jer. 24. The larger immediate context of Jeremiah informed his entire argument regarding boasting in the wisdom and strength of man. In fact, the Jeremiah text provides the entire

vocabulary of the text of St. Paul. Against Jeremiah Paul weighs the comments of his wayward brethren at Corinth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

There is a proper kind of boasting! Paul spells it out with a capstone quote from Jer 9:24 (cited also in 2 Cor 10:17). Compare his own extended “boast” in 2 Cor 11:16–30. As he glories in the Lord, Paul as preacher ties the attributes of Yahweh (“kindness, justice, and righteousness”) with the saving work of Jesus (*dikaio sunē te kai hagiasmos kai apolutrōsis*, “righteousness, holiness, and redemption”), starting his list where Jeremiah ended. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:18–31 We should avoid pride and boasting about anything we do for God or for others. We bring nothing but sin into our relationship with God but receive all good things from Him. • Heavenly Father, give Your people grace to recognize that all praise belongs to You alone. Amen. (TLSB)

Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

The Beatitudes

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called son of God. ¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

5:1-12 Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God’s gracious gifts to those who repent of their sins and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God’s goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of His sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed, now and forever. (TLSB)

5:3-11 Jesus began His sermon by nine times declaring His disciples blessed because of what God had in store for them. Jesus was not making ethical demands of His followers but was describing blessings they would fully enjoy in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1). The beatitudes are a common literary form found throughout Scripture (e.g., Ps. 1:1; Luke 11:28; Rev. 19:9) (TLSB)

5:1 *crowds* – Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους—The adversative translation of δέ as “but” is called for by the contrast between the massive crowds that followed Jesus (4:25) and his action of separating himself (though not completely; see 7:28) from them in order to teach more directly those who have begun to be “his disciples” (5:1). (CC)

His fame spread from north to south through the whole Holy Land, and even beyond its borders... His influence spread wider and wider; His holy teaching, His works of mercy, attracted crowds from every quarter. It seemed as if the whole world was going after Him, as if all Palestine would submit to His authority. It was not to be so, sunshine would give place to place to darkness, favor to persecution. (PC)

Jesus separated Himself from the “great crowds” (4:25), though some did hear His teaching (7:28). (TLSB)

As part of the introduction to the Sermon, Matthew mentions for the first time the figure of the “crowds” who followed Jesus (4:25). As is clear in these verses and throughout the Gospel, the “crowds” never attain to the status of those who believe in Jesus, even if imperfectly. Although 7:28–29 will declare that in some sense Jesus also teaches the Sermon to the crowds, the specific comment in 5:1–2 that “*his disciples* approached him, and he opened his mouth and began to teach *them* and say ...” distinguishes Jesus’ “disciples” from the “crowds.” These crowds hear Jesus’ words. Moreover, they understand his claim to authority and are astonished by it, though they do not show that they accept his claim (see the textual note on ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων in 7:29). However, through Jesus’ authoritative teaching, it is possible for individuals to emerge from the crowds and to *become* disciples. I shall argue that this is precisely what Matthew narrates in chapter 8. (CC)

As Dale Allison has noted in his remarkable and largely persuasive analysis of the Sermon’s overall structure, Matthew has artfully bracketed the Sermon with a narrative introduction and conclusion. Observe the careful correspondence of features: In 4:25, “Many crowds ... followed him” from around the entire region; in 8:1, “Many crowds followed him.” In 5:1, “When he had seen the crowds, he went up on the mountain”; in 8:1, Jesus “had come down from the mountain.” In 5:2, Jesus “opened his mouth and began to teach” his disciples; in 7:28–29, after Jesus “completed these words, the crowds were being astonished at his teaching.” The concept of “authority” is implicit in the formal reference that Jesus “sat down” and “opened his mouth” (5:1–2), and his “authority” is explicitly mentioned in 7:29. (CC)

These crowds followed Jesus about in many places, at times gathering by the thousands, so that Jesus often found little time to rest and privacy. Some of them may have been attracted by some of the things he did and may not really have been disciples.

mountainside. The exact location is uncertain. It may have been the gently sloping hillside at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Capernaum (see note on Lk 6:20–49). The new law, like the old (Ex 19:3), was given from a mountain. (CSB)

Location unknown. Mountains were common sites for significant events (cf 17:1). Jesus’ teaching in chs 5–7 has long been known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is the first of five major sermons, or discourses, in Mt (cf ch 10; 13:1–52; ch 18; chs 24–25). Augustine: “The sermon before us is perfect in all the precepts by which the Christian life is moulded” (*NPNF* 1 6:3). (TLSB)

ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος—Although εἰς often means “into,” the context of “he went up” and “mountain” naturally adjusts the sense of the preposition to mean “to, on” (see BDAG, 1 α). This clause, “he went up on the mountain,” provides the most significant textual evidence for scholars who detect that Matthew wants his readers/hearers to view Jesus as a new or greater Moses. While there is nothing inherently objectionable about such a typology, its presence here is doubtful. Although the language does occur in the LXX ten times in reference to Moses ascending Mount Sinai, it is used in other contexts as well. Therefore, that clause alone cannot bear the weight of establishing a Moses typology in 5:1–2. It is important to observe that mountains in Matthew are not particularly connected with Moses; see especially the commentary on 17:1–8, where Matthew presents Jesus in terms of his deity, and on 28:16–20, where Jesus’ identity as Son of God is most prominent. Also, LXX Ps 23:3 (MT/ET 24:3) asks about the

worshiper who “will go up on the mountain of the Lord” (ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ κυρίου, LXX Ps 23:3, from a psalm that is the background for Mt 5:8), so when the disciples approach Jesus on the mountain in 5:1, this suggests that he is “the Lord.” (CC)

Does Matthew here portray Jesus, as he ascends a mountain, sits, opens his mouth, and begins to teach his disciples, as a new or greater Moses? Many authors have so concluded. Others are not convinced. Still others acknowledge that while Matthew may be describing Jesus so as to evoke the image of Moses, other Christological concerns are more important. David Garland’s comments are especially helpful in this regard. He acknowledges (more fully than I am prepared to do) that Matthew’s early chapters contain some parallels between Moses and Jesus. He then notes the major differences between Moses and Jesus in key Matthean texts. Garland concludes that, in general and specifically in 5:1–2, “while Matthew presents Jesus as Moses-like, he does not depict him as a new Moses but as the Lord, the son of God.” (CC)

The very content of the Sermon also prevents too close an identification between Jesus and Moses. While one of the Sermon’s major units (5:21–48) has to do with the proper interpretation of the Torah, Jesus speaks there six times with unfettered *divine* authority: “But *I* say to you . . .” Moreover, most of the Sermon is not directly concerned with the Torah of Moses. In sum, while there is certainly a key continuity between God’s teaching that came through Moses and the teaching that the Lord issues out of his own authority, Jesus does not ascend the mountain in order to speak like a greater Moses. If anything, it is the disciples who receive divine revelation on the mountain who “play the role of Moses,” and Jesus speaks with the mouth of God himself. (CC)

Location unknown. Mountains were common sites for significant events (cf. 17:1). (TLSB)

sat down. It was the custom for Jewish rabbis to be seated while teaching (see Mk 4:1; 9:35; Lk 4:20; 5:3; Jn 8:2). (CSB)

Teachers at the time of Jesus sat in the midst of their pupils.

disciples. Lit. “learners.” (CSB)

Gk *mathetes*; Learner, apprentice. Common in Gospels and Acts, but never used in Epistles. Often means the 12 called “apostles” (10:1-2), but can also mean a larger group of adherents. The feminine form appears once (see note, Acts 9:36). Here, the term includes the four fishermen (cf 4:18-22) plus others from the crowds who responded to Jesus’ call to repent. (TLSB)

mathatas – It denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their Master. Unlike the people of Jesus’ day, they did not choose him but he chose them (John 15:16). Disciple always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the disciple. The basic meaning of the English noun “disciple” and is “learner.” Essentially a disciple is one who accepts, learns from, and follows a teacher and his instruction. These were the twelve and also others who believed.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

5:2 *taught them* – ἐδίδασκεν—The imperfect indicative readily conveys an inceptive force: Jesus “*began* to teach.” See also the imperfect *περιῆγεν* in 4:23. Matthew’s Gospel contains five major teaching

discourses and several smaller ones; the Sermon on the Mount is the first. Here is where Jesus truly does begin to teach his disciples, and his teaching is a major concern of the first Gospel. (CC)

To a large extent, the Sermon can be seen as Jesus' blessing of his disciples (5:3–12) followed by the enunciation of the calling (5:13–16) that he has given them to be salt and light. The implications of that calling are then fully spelled out in the main body of the Sermon. The order of these parts, however, is significant. Without the blessing of Jesus—without the strength and power and hope that the Beatitudes provide when they are rightly understood and believed—no one can receive and live in the calling that Jesus then gives. (CC)

The extent to which triads dominate the Sermon's organization can be easily shown. There are nine beatitudes (though the ninth is clearly different from the first eight): three times three (5:3–12). There are two sets of three issues with regard to which Jesus says, "But I say to you ..." (5:21–32; 5:33–48). The treatment of piety deals with three issues (giving of alms, prayer, and fasting) and is characterized by strongly parallel language triply repeated (6:1–18). The summary of the disciples' calling is marked by three invitations: "ask ... seek ... knock" (7:7–11). The conclusion of the Sermon contains three warnings: "Enter ..." (7:13–14), "Beware ..." (7:15–20), and "Not everyone ... will enter ..." (7:21–27). (CC)

Another intriguing rhetorical feature of the Sermon is of some importance for understanding how the Sermon will affect, or not affect, those who hear it. The Beatitudes, it will be argued below, are the introduction or the "doorway" into the Sermon. In order to understand the Sermon aright, one must appropriate the Beatitudes as the Gospel pronouncements that they are. After eight *third person* plural statements ("the poor in spirit ...," "the people who are mourning ...," etc., 5:3–10), Jesus changes and speaks one final, longer *second person* plural statement ("You are blessed ...," 5:11–12). In other words, as people enter the "doorway," Jesus speaks first to "them" (see also 5:2) and then to "you." After the Beatitudes, the Sermon's teaching continues the second person (mostly plural) address without interruption until the concluding "exit" and warning section (7:13–27). There the pattern is reversed: the exit unit begins with second person plural warnings (7:13–14 and 7:15–20) and then shifts to third person address in 7:21–27. Thus in the exit and warning section, Jesus speaks first to "you" and then to "them." (CC)

These changes in address seem to suggest the following. Unless the hearer/reader receives for himself the Lord's teaching *through* the blessings of 5:3–12, the rest of the Sermon's teaching will not be accessible. In other words, by faith the hearer can and does claim the Beatitudes' blessings, which Jesus first offers to "them," as offered for "you." All who receive those gifts are disciples. Receiving the gifts of the Beatitudes, then, disciples hear the calling of Jesus in the main body of the Sermon's teaching. Further, every disciple of Jesus lives his life cognizant of the sober warnings about life in this time, when the reign of God in Jesus has both come and has not yet fully come, and lives with an eye on the final goal (7:13–27). A person who does not receive Jesus' blessings and does not live with that perspective will not stand on the Last Day. The final warnings at the end of the Sermon change back to third person address, applying not only to the disciples, but to all people, and thus the hearer/reader "exits" the Sermon. To the majority of the crowds, then, the Sermon on the Mount is about "them," in third person, for they do not believe in Jesus' authority. For those to whom faith and understanding begin to be granted, however, the blessing and calling of Jesus become their own; Jesus speaks to "you." (CC)

One final matter is important before turning to the exegesis of the blessed doorway to the Sermon. That is the matter of how Matthew portrays the Jesus who is here speaking. Two textual features deserve emphasis. The first pertains to the authority with which Jesus speaks the Sermon in its entirety. The crowds, who by and large remain "third person" observers of the Sermon and indeed of Jesus' ministry as

a whole, react when the Sermon is finished by marveling at Jesus' claim to authority (7:28–29). None of their other religious teachers dared to speak divine blessing and calling simply out of their own authority the way Jesus has done. In fact, Jesus has claimed that his words are the unshakeable foundation on which a person may and *must* build his hope for eschatological salvation (7:24–27)! (CC)

The second textual feature is the way that Matthew portrays Jesus *using* such unparalleled authority. Both before the Sermon and after it, Jesus speaks and acts with authority. His authority, however, is of a particular kind. It is an authority for the needy, an authority that expresses itself in healings and exorcisms (4:23–24; 8:1–16; 8:28–34), in saving those in danger (8:23–27), and in forgiving sins (9:1–8). Even through the brief narrative leading up to the Sermon (4:18–5:2), Matthew portrays a gracious Jesus, reaching out to those in need and manifesting the gracious rule of God as he drives back the power of Satan and calls people to be his disciples. (CC)

This is the Jesus who opens his mouth and begins to speak to his disciples and to all who will have ears to hear. He has brought the reign of heaven into history. He now reveals both the blessings of that reign as well as the calling given to those who in faith receive those royal end-time deeds of salvation in him. (CC)

The tension between the “already now” and the “not yet” of the reign of God in Jesus is vital and central to the message of the Beatitudes. This “already/not yet” tension is reflected most obviously in the verbs in the *ὅτι* clauses, the tenses of which should be taken seriously. The *ὅτι* clause verb *ἔστιν* in Beatitudes 1 and 8 (“... *is* theirs,” 5:3b; 5:10b) is present indicative. The verbs in the *ὅτι* clauses in Beatitudes 2–7 (5:4–9) are future indicatives. The reign of heaven in Jesus *already now* belongs to the poor in spirit (5:3b), even to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (5:10b). Yet the promise of final comfort (5:4b), final inheritance (5:5b), final satiation with God's saving righteousness (5:6b), final mercy (5:7b), the perfect vision of God (5:8b), and the blessed reception of full identity as the sons of God (5:9b) will come *only on the Last Day*. In the meantime, the disciples of Jesus must expect that their present existence, ever blessed because of Jesus' presence with them (18:20; 28:20), will nonetheless be characterized by “mourning,” “hungering,” and “thirsting” (5:4a, 6a). The equivalent statement in St. Paul's terms would be “We were saved in hope. ... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it through endurance” (Rom 8:24–25). The tension between present blessing and joy on the one hand and present mourning until the final time of comfort on the other is central to life as Jesus' disciples. So certain and strong, however, is the promised final comfort that it impinges on and alters the present flawed existence. Jesus' disciples live now in light of what is to come. (CC)

To summarize this lengthy treatment of the Beatitudes, they do not make ethical demands, nor do they primarily exhort. They do not refer directly to Jesus himself. Rather, the subject of the main clause in every verse describes those whom Jesus has called to be his disciples. The first group of four blessings addresses Jesus' disciples in terms of their own innate emptiness (5:3–6). Left to themselves, apart from Christ, disciples (and all people) are “poor in spirit” and “lowly,” given only to “mourning” and to “hungering.” If one were to ask, “Where is Jesus?” with regard to the first four blessings, the answer would be, “In the *ὅτι* (‘because ...’) clauses!” Those who have no resources to offer God are nevertheless eschatologically blessed, “*because*” Jesus has come to reign over such persons in grace and mercy, “*because*” the promised end-time blessings will come to those who have nothing besides God-given faith in Jesus. He is the Servant of Yahweh, proclaiming Good News to the poor! (CC)

The second group of Beatitudes (5:7–12) still describes the disciples of Jesus: the merciful, the pure in heart, and so forth. These blessings testify that Jesus' call to discipleship begins to transform those who are called (5:7–12). When Jesus joins men, women, and children to himself, that union begins to manifest the life of Christ himself in the lives of his disciples. That was true for Jesus' original disciples there on the mountain in Galilee. It is also true for the disciples of Jesus today, who are baptized into union with

Christ and who comprise his church, which hears and receives the Beatitudes in faith. Indeed, the Beatitudes contain within themselves the kerygmatic power to *make* a hearer or reader into a disciple of Jesus and a member of his church. To hear and believe that one is poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt, and then to hear Jesus pronounce blessing and the promise of the reign of heaven can make one into a believer in Jesus. Hearing and believing the Beatitudes can also sustain that faith. When life is hard and the power of evil is too great, Jesus' words comfort us: "The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!" (5:3). (CC)

Nouns and not verbs. Where there are verbs (reward part) they are done by God.

5:3-11 Jesus began His sermon by nine times declaring His disciples blessed because of what God had in store for them. Jesus was not making ethical demands of His followers but was describing blessings they would fully enjoy in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1) (TLSB)

5:3 *Blessed*. The word means more than "happy," because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. "Blessed" here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. (CSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τοῦ πνεύματος—In each of the nine Beatitudes, the Greek puts the plural adjective μακάριοι, "blessed," in emphatic first position, and therefore I have italicized it in the translation. Wallace notes this common phenomenon of fronting for emphasis. In each Beatitude μακάριοι is predicate to the subject (here οἱ πτωχοί). The adjective μακάριος in Matthew has strong connotations of present (11:6; 13:16; 16:17) and future (24:46) *salvation*. It does not mean "happy," but something much stronger, tantamount to "saved." (CC)

makareeos – To be extend great fortune and be well off. It means to have a joy (deep/true happiness) that is with us even during difficult times. One way of looking at it is that "happiness" comes from the word "happenings." Not everything that happens to us makes us happy. Joy is a "J" word as is Jesus. In Jesus we can have joy even in the midst of tears of losing a loved one or other painful events. This involves the blessings of faith that come through the Word.

makarioi – Possessing great spiritual treasures, God's favor and His aid in all aspects of life. This goes well beyond happy because happiness is linked to happenings and some of the things that happen in our lives do not make up happy. Blessed could better be described as joy because that can be linked to Jesus. We can be crying and yet have the joy of Jesus comfort in our hearts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

The Beatitudes are markedly Christological, but not in an isolated sense. They are descriptions both of Jesus and of those who have been joined by Jesus' Father to his kingdom. For Matthew Christology and ecclesiology are interrelated. They are the Christological prism through which the followers of Jesus find their standing before God. (The Sermon on the Mount – David P. Scaer – CPH – pp. 79, 81)

The Beatitudes (5:3–12) are the first unit of the Sermon on the Mount and, as I have indicated in the commentary above on the Sermon's structure, these blessings form a sort of "doorway" through which Matthew's readers/hearers must pass if they are to grasp aright the Lord's great teaching in the Sermon. The Beatitudes' structure consists of two groups of four blessings in the third person plural ("the people/they," 5:3–6 and 5:7–10) followed by a final, much longer blessing in the second person plural ("you," 5:11–12). That final, ninth statement of blessing (5:11–12) acts both as the definite conclusion to the Beatitudes as well as a transition into the second person address that characterizes Jesus' teaching in the body of the Sermon. There are obviously nine Beatitudes, each beginning with the plural adjective

“blessed” (μακάριοι). Also obviously, however, the first eight Beatitudes comprise a unit that is bracketed by 5:3 and 5:10, the only sentences in which the verb in the ὅτι clause (“because . . .”) is not a future indicative, but a present indicative (“because the reign of heaven *is* theirs,” 5:3b, 10b). Indeed, the entire ὅτι clause in 5:3 and 5:10 is identical. This inclusio marks off 5:3–10. At the same time, the common “blessed” and shared subject matter between 5:10 and 5:11–12 insure that the last long statement of blessing is related to the first eight blessings. (CC)

In addition, the eight Beatitudes in 5:3–10 can be understood as consisting of four pairs in a patterned arrangement. I will show below that 5:3 names those who occupy a certain *status* which, when hearers acknowledge it as their own status, produces the *attitude* described in 5:4. That is to say, to be “poor in spirit” is an objective condition that characterizes all humans in and of themselves, whether they know it or not. When a person begins to acknowledge that he or she is “poor in spirit,” that acknowledgment produces the “mourning” of which 5:4 speaks. A similar relationship holds for the second pair of blessings. Mt 5:5 describes a status that then produces the attitude articulated in 5:6: those who begin to see that they are objectively “lowly” (5:5) are then moved to be “hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (5:6). Thus, the first two pairs of blessings each exhibit a relationship of “condition . . . result.” (CC)

The third (5:7–8) and fourth (5:9–10) pairs of Beatitudes exhibit something very close to the same paired relationships, but in reverse order. The reversed description “result . . . condition” works well, I would judge, with regard to “merciful” (5:7) and “pure in heart” (5:8), especially when the latter descriptive phrase is understood in light of LXXs 24:3–6). Those who in their lives show themselves to be “merciful” are able to do that because they are “pure in heart.” The fourth pair of blessings is also related, but here the connection is a little different. Those who have become “peacemakers” (5:9) can expect to find themselves among those who are “persecuted because of righteousness” (5:10). For the peace that Jesus’ disciples will offer to the world will sometimes be rejected, and that very offer of peace will cause them to be hated and persecuted by others. (CC)

Turning to the interpretation of 5:3–12, then, let me emphasize again one specific point. Jesus teaches the entire Sermon with authority (see 7:29). Most especially, then, these nine eschatological Gospel blessings proclaim with authority the saving and transforming truths that the reign of God in Jesus offers to all who are Jesus’ disciples. When a man or woman is given to grasp the meaning of Jesus’ gracious preaching in the Beatitudes, that person will be able to encounter the remaining teaching of the Sermon in a certain way. You enter by the doorway. (CC)

poor in spirit. In contrast to the spiritually proud and self-sufficient. (CSB)

The spiritually poor who acknowledge their moral bankruptcy. Cf Lk 4:18. (TLSB)

In 5:3, Jesus pronounces both a present blessing to “the poor in spirit” and a present grounding reason for that state of blessing. Since the emphatically positioned μακάριος, “blessed,” in Matthew’s Gospel is virtually the equivalent of “saved” or “redeemed,” it is of utmost importance to specify the meaning of “the poor in spirit.” What persons does Jesus pronounce to be blessed—saved because the reign of heaven, with its attendant gifts, already now belongs to them? (CC)

As indicated above in the textual note on 5:3, the crucial context for interpreting Jesus’ first Beatitude consists of 11:2–6 and Is 61:1. We will first consider three important connections between Mt 5:3 and 11:5. First, the only theological use of the term “poor” in Matthew occurs in 5:3 and 11:5. Second, the promise of eschatological blessing is central to each context. In chapter 11, Jesus responds to the Baptizer’s query whether Jesus is the One who is to come by summarizing the deeds of the Christ in phrases drawn from Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61, and concludes with the promise, “Blessed [μακάριος] is the

one who is not caused to stumble because of me” (11:6). Third and finally, the activity described in 11:5, “And the poor are having Good News preached to them,” portrays “the poor” as the objects of proclamation; they are being addressed. This is precisely what is happening in 5:3, albeit in third person rather than second person address. It is hard to escape the conclusion—indeed, one should not try!—that “the poor in spirit” in 5:3 are the same as “the poor” in 11:5 to whom Good News is being proclaimed. Here in 5:3, then, Jesus is proclaiming Good News to “the poor in spirit.” (CC)

With an eye still fixed on 11:2–5, then, we may ask what it means to be “poor in spirit” (5:3). If the dative of respect is virtually the equivalent of an adverb, then the phrase means “spiritually poor.” This in itself, however, does not yet lend enough precision. I want to speak carefully and precisely here and to take my lead from the other phrases found in 11:2–5. Jesus’ reply to the Baptizer identifies various groups who have been receiving his ministry: blind people, lame people, lepers, deaf people, dead people, and “the poor.” Setting the last crucial phrase aside for the moment, every one of the other groups refers to people in an objective condition of need. There is nothing in the description about the *attitude* or *awareness* of these people. Jesus has not been ministering to people who are “sorrowing that they are blind” or “aware that they are lepers,” although doubtless such sorrow and awareness existed. Rather, his ministry has gone out to those in conditions of want, of lack, of inability, of objective need. (CC)

This same objective character naturally applies to “the poor” who receive the Good News in 11:5 and to “the poor in spirit” here in 5:3. To be “poor in spirit,” in other words, refers to an objective status or condition. To be “spiritually poor,” then, is equivalent to being “spiritually destitute, without resource, without what one needs in the spiritual realm.” Those who are “poor in spirit” must have their spiritual needs provided by Another. They are, in a phrase, like sheep who are lost and distressed (9:36; 10:6) or like sinners who need to be called and forgiven (9:9–13). Thus Jesus’ opening blessing embraces all fallen human beings, for by nature all people are poor in spirit, and all need to hear Good News. (CC)

The phrase τῷ πνεύματι, “in spirit,” is a dative of respect, and virtually equivalent to an adverb: “spiritually poor.” The commentary will put forth the view that these are the same people as in 11:5: “And the poor [πτωχοί] are having Good News preached [to them].” This link between 5:3; 11:2–6; and Is 61:1 (to which Mt 11:5 refers) is the key that forestalls any interpretation that would make being “poor in spirit” either a virtue or an attitude of any kind whatsoever. It is a status, a condition. (CC)

The term “poor” as used by Matthew does not denote economic poverty, although both in Jesus’ day and in our own, the spiritually poor often are also economically poor. In a fallen world, wealth brings intrinsic spiritual danger (Mt 19:23–26; see also 1 Tim 6:9–10, 17–19), and the powerful can readily oppress those who eschew violence and instead trust in God for their ultimate hope. In such a world the “poor in spirit” may very well be physically impoverished as well. Even as we reject the excesses of what is sometimes loosely described as “liberation theology,” we must beware the dangers of living in a wealthy, consumeristic, greedy society, such as North America in the twenty-first century. It is no blessing to be economically poor, and it is not automatically a bane to have an abundance of material things. However, God can use physical want to turn hearts to himself. Moreover, Jesus and his apostles speak sharply about the folly of those who glory in their wealth and whose hearts are cold toward their needy neighbors, especially fellow believers. (CC)

Franzmann says, “It is not saying too much if one describes the poor in spirit as the man who is acutely conscious of his own nothingness, of the poverty and lack of his self, of his need for another.” In his own mind and heart he is beggarly and quite humble (Is.66:2). An example would be the tax collector who “would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God have mercy on me, a sinner.’” Yet he, Jesus says, went home justified (Lk 18:13-14). The poor are those who have repented and attached themselves to Jesus. Franzmann sees a connection between the poor in spirit and those who hunger and

thirst after righteousness, claiming that they are but two aspects of one basic attitude toward God, the Christian attitude. (cf. Ps. 25; 40:17; 69:32-33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

It is stronger than poor, it is cringingly, beggarly poor... It is the attitude that grows out of the profound realization of utter helplessness and beggary as far as any ability or possession of self is concerned. These wretched beggars bring absolutely nothing to God but their complete emptiness and need and stoop in the dust for pure grace and mercy only. This is the condition and attitude of true repentance preached by the Baptist and by Jesus as basis for all who would come to God and to His kingdom. (Lenski)

Rock of Ages – LSB 761

As Christians we confess our total spiritual poverty and look to Jesus for rescue.

ptochoi – The corporate nature Jesus shares with his people also solves the problem as to how he could describe himself as “poor in spirit,” which we have defined as “those who stand before God as destitute beggars.” He is one with his people; he bears their sins (Matthew 8:17). Not only is he poor and has no possessions, but as slave he puts himself in debt to all men. (Scaer p. 81)

Isaiah 57:15 “For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is not something earned. It is more a gift than a recompense. (CSB)

A possession that disciples enjoy even now by faith. This blessing is repeated in v 10. Augustine: “The one reward, which is the kingdom of heaven, is variously named [in the Beatitudes]” (NPNF 1 6:7). (TLSB)

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν—In the causal ὅτι clause, the genitive pronoun αὐτῶν is in emphatic first position, and so “theirs” is italicized in the translation. Here and in 5:10 the genitive expresses possession. “The reign of heaven is theirs” is equivalent to saying, “The reign of heaven (and its attendant blessings) *belongs* to the poor in spirit.” (CC)

This is a future surety and a present reality though grace.

Jesus declares that such people are eschatologically blessed, already now. Why? Because the reign of heaven and the blessing that it is already bringing into history belong to people like that, to people who have no spiritual resources of their own: “The reign of heaven is *theirs*” (5:3). There is no reason to blur the distinctions between the tenses of the indicative mood verb in the ὅτι clause (“because ...”) of each Beatitude (see the second textual note on 5:3). The careful artistry and structure of 5:3–12 suggest that there is some precision to this teaching of Jesus. The promise of 5:3, then, is that already now the blessings of the reign of heaven in Jesus belong to those who, in themselves, do not have spiritual ability or strength. These blessings for the disciples during Jesus’ ministry include forgiveness (9:1–8), healing (e.g., 4:23–24; 8:13, 16; 15:28), and the divinely given knowledge of who Jesus is and what his reign is like (13:10–17). (CC)

We disciples of Jesus who live in the time after his resurrection and before his coming in glory possess the blessings of the reign of heaven as well: forgiveness, Baptism into Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit for faith and obedience, the nourishment of the Eucharist, the fellowship of the redeemed. All such present blessings of the reign of God in Jesus belong to those who have nothing in themselves. (CC)

This is nothing other than the Gospel of the reign of heaven (4:23), complete Good News, offered with no conditions, no specifications, no limitations. The Good News of this first Beatitude is completely consonant with the character of Jesus' ministry of preaching and teaching and healing (4:23–24). Since his disciples are those who have already begun to be shaped by his message, "Repent! For the reign of heaven stands near!" (4:17; cf. 3:2), they will begin to grasp the Good News of 5:3. In their repentance, worked by Jesus' preaching and teaching, they have begun to know that they are, in fact, "poor in spirit" (5:3). The first Beatitude from Jesus' mouth, then, is a word of complete and utter promise and grace. The reign of heaven belongs to those who have no spiritual resources of their own, to the lost, to the sinners. Because of this, Jesus pronounces them "blessed"! (CC)

The reason why the poor in spirit are blessed is that they are now, in this life, members and subjects of God's kingdom (Luke 6:20), ruled by His Spirit dwelling in their hearts. Their life will extend into heaven in God's presence – His gift. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

For Matthew "the kingdom of the heavens" refers to the salvation which God is accomplishing in Jesus, that is, in his death for sinners and its proclamation. (Scaer p. 81)

Revelation 21:27 "Name in the Book"

5:4 *those who mourn* – Over sin; similar to the spiritually poor. (TLSB)

οἱ πενθοῦντες—The present stem participle here (and in 5:6) is significant: "the people who *are* mourning ..." (CC)

he next declaration of blessing addresses those who have come to a certain awareness; they are "the people who are mourning" (5:4). The declaration of present blessing is the same as in 5:3a ("The ... *are* blessed"), but the reason for that blessing is now in the future tense: "They *will be* comforted." There is an important interplay between the present stem participle οἱ πενθοῦντες, "the people who are mourning," and the future tense "they *will be* comforted." The mourning of which Jesus speaks is something that will continue to characterize the lives of his disciples, to a greater or lesser extent, until the day of final comfort dawns at the consummation of the age. There is a realism here, an acknowledgment that even though there is present blessing in the reign of God through Jesus, there is also sin and evil, which means the full comfort is "not yet." This is, in fact, what causes the mourning: present sin and evil, both in the lives of the mourners themselves, who acknowledge that they are in themselves "poor in spirit" (5:3), and in the church and the world around them. (CC)

Mt 5:4 is not an exhortation to mourn, nor to mourn more fully, or anything like that. It would only become, in a perverse manner, a word of Law if anyone were foolish enough to think that he could be Jesus' disciple and encounter no cause for mourning. The second Beatitude follows as a result from the first. All who recognize themselves to be poor in spirit and yet also blessed in Christ will find themselves mourning over evil and sin. So the function of 5:3 is repeated in 5:4. It is a Gospel word of promise and comfort. (CC)

The use of the present tense here (penthountes) denotes continuous grieving and lamentation over one's repeated sinning. Our entire life must be continuous contrition and repentance, says Luther in the first of his 95 Theses. It is a constant cry of distress to God, which may well also include the cry caused by persecution from the enemies of Christ, mentioned in the eighth beatitude, and mourning over the damaging effects of sin, including illness and death. Already during Christ's earthly ministry He

comforted some mourners by restoring dead loved ones to life (Mt. 9:18-26; John 11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Romans 7:15, 18-19, 24-25 ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Our Lord’s primary thought must have been of mourning over not just one’s sins but over the realized poverty in spirit. (PC)

The sorrow for our sins in true contrition should not be excluded from this mourning... But, of course, we must include all other grief and sorrow due to the power of sin in the world as this inflicts blows, losses, and pain upon the godly. It includes every wrong done us, as well as every painful consequence of our won wrongdoing... Behind this sorrow of the godly lies the recognition of the merciless power of sin and our helplessness to ward it off and escape. Hence the mourning is a constant cry to God in their distress. (Lenski)

This is not walking around with a distorted face and accompanying behavior like the Pharisees sometimes did. John and Pharisees Mt 3:7-8.

Romans 5:1-5: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: “³Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

Comforted – The comfort the Messiah brings will be fully realized in heaven. (TLSB)

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται—In Beatitudes 2–7 (Mt 5:4–9) the subject in each ὅτι clause is the unnecessary, and so therefore empathic, third person personal pronoun αὐτοί. “They themselves” would perhaps be a bit strong, and so in the translation I have italicized “they.” The pattern of emphasizing the human *recipients* of eschatological blessing is the chief reason why several of the verbs in the ὅτι clauses are in the passive voice. The agent of the passives—the one who will *bestow* the blessings—is, of course, God. Thus, for example, “*they* will be comforted” (5:4b) means “God will comfort *them*.” (CC)

This use of the passive voice when God is the implied agent of the action is called “the divine passive.” Wallace notes with common sense that Matthew and other NT writers do not shy away from using “God”

as the subject of active voice verbs (e.g., 3:9; 6:30; 15:4; 19:6), and so he adroitly cautions against attributing this construction to a reluctance on the part of the author to use the divine name. (CC)

The future tense, used in the Second through the Seventh Beatitudes, points to an activity which God is about to do. The church's affliction shall be replaced by ecstatic joy in the sense of Psalm 126 where those who weep "shall come home with shouts of joy" (Psalm 126:6). (Scaer p. 83)

Isaiah 61:2-3 "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."

The future tense of "be comforted" is future to the mourning (Lenski). Divine comfort and consolation in the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ will follow on the heels of repentant mourning. And in heaven every tear shall be wiped away (Rev. 21:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Romans 5:3-5, "³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:37, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

5:5 meek. This beatitude is taken from Ps 37:11 and refers not so much to an attitude toward man as to a disposition before God, namely, humility. (CSB)

Lowly, humble. (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς—I have translated the substantized adjective *πραεῖς* as "the lowly." I intend by this a reference to a status or condition, as is the case with "poor" in 5:3, and not to an attitude or activity. The term *πραῦς* can bear the meaning of "gentle" or "humble" in a positive, voluntary, active sense, and this is the meaning when it is applied to Jesus in 11:29 and 21:5; see it also in 1 Pet 3:4, as well as LXX Num 12:3 (translating *רַחֵם*); Joel 4:11 (ET 3:11; MT 4:11); Zech 9:9 (translating *רַחֵם*); Dan 4:19 (MT 4:16; ET 4:19). Far more often in the LXX, however, the Greek term translates the Hebrew *רַחֵם* in the sense of "one who is objectively in need of deliverance." That is the force of the term in LXX Ps 36:11 (MT/ET 37:11), which is an extremely close parallel to Jesus' words here: οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσιν γῆν, "But the lowly will inherit the land." See *πραῦς* also in LXX Pss 24:9 (MT/ET 25:9); 33:3 (MT 34:3; ET 34:2); 75:10 (MT 76:10; ET 76:9); Job 24:4 (cf. Job 36:15; Zeph 3:12; Sirach 10:14). At times, "the lowly" are contrasted with "the wicked" (LXX Pss 36:10–11 [MT/ET 37:10–11]; 146:6 [MT/ET 147:6]; cf. Is 26:5–6), and at least once, "the lowly" are equated with God's people (LXX Ps 149:4). Thus, as many interpreters note, "the lowly" here in Mt 5:5 are essentially in the same needy condition as "the poor" (5:3), and the two expressions are closely parallel in meaning. (CC)

This is in a condition or status of not being able to help or save themselves. They may be oppressed by many different things or by many people. The oppressive power of Satan and their own sins are at the heart of their lowly status. (CC)

Here the Savior is referring to the kindly disposed – gentle, patient, and forgiving people which Arndt renders as the “kindhearted,” exemplified in the attitude of Jesus (1 Peter 2:23). Certainly they are not the gruff, the stern, the proud or violent – the grasping wicked ones (Psalm 37). Paradoxically, the latter are often the people who in this life enjoy greater prosperity (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 18:29-30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

These are those who trust in the Lord and wait patiently for him and place their hope in him. The meek are not loud and boisterous or insist on their rights but even abide mistreatment for the sake of Christ and his kingdom. Jesus demonstrated this by giving up his place in heaven, suffering and going to the cross for us.

Psalm 37:11 “But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.”

prais – This refers to internal condition of a person before God and known only to him. It manifests itself in behavior that could be described as “gentle, patient or kindhearted” exemplified in the attitude of Jesus.

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

This beatitude comes from Psalm 37, especially verse 11. The meek are certainly not the gruff, the stern, the proud or violent – the grasping wicked ones described in this psalm. Interestingly the people who act like that are often people who in this life enjoy greater prosperity. (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 18:29-30)

Shall inherit the earth – We will inherit the new heavens and new earth after our bodies are resurrected on the Last Day. (TLSB)

Jesus, the Son of God, promises to all such oppressed and spiritually powerless disciples the future eschatological inheritance of a new creation: “They will inherit the earth.” Please observe that the hope of those who are in need of deliverance is not some disembodied existence of the soul. The hope is both creational and eschatological. There will be a regeneration of all things (Mt 19:28) and a final Judgment Day (25:31–32). Those who have suffered oppression at the hands of wicked forces and wicked men will receive the blessings of God’s great reversal on that day. The light of that future horizon is already now beginning to shine; the reign of heaven stands near (4:17)! With that light on the horizon, the lowly are already saved, already blessed. (CC)

In the judgment scene the word “inherit” refers to what the Son of Man gives his followers on the Day of Judgment (25:34). Though Matthew does not use the word “grace,” he expresses the thought of unmerited and unearned reward with the word “inherit.” The followers of Jesus inherit a land which they did not earn. In the final judgment scene none makes a claim to reward for what they have done. (Scaer p. 85)

5:6 *hunger and thirst for righteousness* – Fervent desire for God’s righteousness, or salvation (Is 51:5–8; cf 3:15). (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην—The meaning of “righteousness” here is determined by the clause in which it occurs. Presumably, δικαιοσύνη refers to something that the named subjects desire but do not possess. They also cannot obtain it for themselves; otherwise, it is difficult to imagine why they would continue “hungering” and “thirsting” for it, as implied by the present tense participles πεινῶντες and διψῶντες. In view of the eschatological context, I take “righteousness” here in the same sense as in 3:15, namely, God’s saving end-time deeds. (CC)

This verse is the nucleus of this sermon study. The tense of two participles, *peinontes* and *diphontes*, denotes continued action of those who strongly desire and long to do God's will far more completely than they have been doing. Even in the very act of doing God's will, they know that they have not attained what they desire. Paul's example of not having attained perfection, but straining toward and pressing on toward the goal, is apropos (Phil. 3:12-14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Isaiah 55:1, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

Jeremiah 23:6 "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness."

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Man who went to Buddhist monk for information but didn't stop talking about how much he knew. Cup to overflowing – interview is over you are too full of yourself.

peinontes and *dipsontes* – Both are present tense participles that denote continued action. This refers not to a physical hungering, but to an internal longing of the soul in its relationship to God. The background is Israel's sojourning in the wilderness where for both food and water they were completely dependent upon God. They long for something which only God can satisfy. (Scaer p. 85)

The craving for... Intense longing, such as can only be compared to that of a starving man for food. (PC)

Of the seven appearances of the word "righteousness" in the gospel, five are found in the Sermon. In none of these places can the meaning of righteousness be the fulfillment of God's legal demands in the sense of the commandments. (Scaer p. 85)

Righteousness is to be understood in this context as referring to the sanctified life of right living according to God's will, which results from justification by grace through faith in Christ. It must be better than the "righteousness" of the Scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20), which was no righteousness in God's sight and insufficient before Him (Arndt). No righteousness of our own, even it exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, will suffice for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Only the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith achieves that. In Christ we "become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Shall be satisfied – This is done by the work of Christ.

ESV – satisfied – "We have the clear assurance that God does not cast aside sinners, that is, those who recognize their sin and desire to come to their senses, who thirst after righteousness." (Luther) (TLSB)

The Greek passive voice points to satisfaction given us by someone else, which will be abundant satisfaction, as this strong verb connotes. In the miraculous feedings of the 5000 and 4000, this same verb is used (Mt. 14:20; 15:37), and it is significant that in both cases there were leftovers – more than the people could eat. God will satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst for righteousness, for God-pleasing living, and provide true happiness. But due to our present weakness a drop of bitterness will always remain in our cup on this earth. Only in the hereafter will we be perfectly satisfied and sanctified through the perfect, imputed righteousness of our Savior (Cf. Luke 6:25). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Matthew 3:15 “Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.”

They will be satisfied or filled, points to something which God is going to accomplish eschatologically, though he has already begun to do it. (Scaer p. 85)

Isaiah 55:1 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

5:7 *the merciful* – A disciple who truly appreciates God’s blessings will be a merciful person and will receive mercy (cf 18:33). (TLSB)

There is a noticeable shift in the Beatitudes in 5:7. Jesus’ words are still Good News. Jesus still pronounces present blessing. Moreover, the future eschatological gifts of God are still the reason for present blessedness, as affirmed explicitly in 5:10, where Jesus repeats the promise of 5:3, “because the reign of heaven *is* theirs,” and also in 5:12, where Jesus promises, “Your reward is great in heaven.” I argued above that in 5:3–6, the disciples of Jesus were described in terms of their inability, rather than their accomplishments, and clearly the last two Beatitudes (5:10–12) promise blessing for disciples who passively suffer. (CC)

In 5:7, however, Jesus says, “The merciful are blessed, because they will be shown mercy.” Is this not in effect an exhortation: “Be merciful, so that you may be shown mercy”? I would argue that that is not the force of 5:7. Rather, the adjective “merciful” (as with the other adjectival subjects in the first four Beatitudes) *describes* Jesus’ disciples—all of them. It bespeaks the transforming power of discipleship and of Jesus’ call to faith. Jesus himself is mercy incarnate, perfect mercy. One simply cannot become his disciple without also beginning to exhibit mercy in a new way. (CC)

This is not merely true in a broad, scriptural or dogmatic way. Matthew itself displays the exegetical evidence to support this contention. It is true that the language of “mercy” is not prominent in Matthew’s Gospel. The adjective ἐλεήμων, “merciful,” actually occurs in the NT only in Mt 5:7 and Heb 2:17. The cognate noun “almsgiving” (ἐλεημοσύνη) occurs in Mt 6:2, 3, 4, where Jesus does assume that his disciples will show such mercy to those in need. Jesus himself responds to the plea of people for him to “show mercy” (ἐλεέω, 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30–31) by healing or exorcizing, but the disciples do not figure in those texts. To the contrary, the disciples are unable to exorcise the demoniac after Jesus’ transfiguration (see the commentary on 17:14–21), and they ask Jesus to give the Canaanite woman what she wants so they can send her away (see 15:21–28). (CC)

The language of showing mercy does figure prominently in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23–35), and this parable’s message provides the chief support for the view that “merciful” in 5:7 can describe disciples of Jesus *qua* disciples. In brief, the master in that parable shows mercy (18:33) to the servant who owed an astronomical debt. That act of mercy, specifically in the action of the master’s forgiveness (18:27), has within itself the power to turn his servant into someone who also shows mercy and forgives the debt owed to him by a fellow servant. In the parable, however, the first servant refuses to show mercy. The result? He is no servant at all, but is condemned and cast into the parabolic equivalent of hell. (CC)

The order of events is all-important. First, the master shows mercy. If that mercy has its desired effect, it both forgives the debt and transforms the debtor. If the mercy does not have its desired effect, then the debtor is not transformed *and the debt remains*. The fifth Beatitude is to be heard in a similar way. First comes the proclamation of present and future blessing to those who have nothing but need, nothing but

inability, nothing but hunger and thirst (5:3–6). Then comes the promise to those who are merciful (5:7). Jesus, who is perfect mercy, *empowers* his disciples, who are united to him, to be merciful. They are not perfectly merciful, of course; just read Matthew’s narrative, read the NT, read church history, and observe the life of every believer! At the same time, however, mercy does emerge after mercy has entered in. Mt 5:7 describes all who are Jesus’ disciples; it reminds them of their identity and promises final blessing and merciful forgiveness at the judgment. It is still a Gospel statement, not an exhortation or command. The force is this: “Those who are mine, and who therefore have begun to be merciful, are eschatologically blessed, for on the Last Day they will receive my mercy in all its fullness.” (CC)

To a worldly-minded person, giving to the poor, visiting and comforting the sick, showing hospitality and aiding people in need and distress is merely a waste of time and money. But showing others the mercy we have experienced from God (Mt. 18:21-35), we will be treated with mercy in this life and in the life to come – not that it is the basis for obtaining life eternal, but because it presupposes justifying faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

eleamones – While in the OT mercy describes Israel’s God who, without limitation, forgives his erring people and always restores them to their former fortunes and status as his own people, in the NT mercy finds its purist expression in Jesus. Mercy describes the community of Jesus as a forgiving one. (Scaer p. 87)

5:8 *heart*. The center of one’s being, including mind, will and emotions (see note on Ps 4:7). (CSB)

These are those who do not worship false gods. Augustine: “A pure heart... is a single heart; and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes; so neither is God seen, unless that is pure by which He can be seen” (NPNF1 6:5). (TLSB)

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ—As with τῷ πνεύματι in 5:3, τῆ καρδίᾳ is a dative of respect. The precise phrase καθαρὸς τῆ καρδίᾳ, “pure in heart,” is found elsewhere in the Scriptures only in LXX Ps 23:4. See the commentary for the importance of attending to this psalm as the context for the meaning and exegesis of Mt 5:8. The adjectival phrase καθαρὰ καρδίᾳ, a “pure heart,” occurs in LXX Gen 20:5–6; Ps 50:12 (MT 51:12; ET 51:10); Job 11:13; 33:3; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; and some manuscripts of 1 Pet 1:22. (CC)

Next comes “The pure in heart are blessed, because they will see God” (5:8). The chief task here is to determine what Jesus means by “the pure in heart” (οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ). The precise phrase occurs in the NT only here, and in the LXX it occurs only in Ps 23:4 (where it is singular, not plural; MT/ET 24:4), to which I will turn below. The Greek phrase καθαρὰ καρδίᾳ, “a pure heart,” occurs several times in Scripture and with a variety of meanings. In LXX Gen 20:5–6, the phrase applies to Abimelech, who took Sarah without knowing that she was Abraham’s wife, so there “with a pure heart” means “innocently, with no obvious evil intent.” In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul twice speaks of believers having a “pure heart,” which produces love for others (1 Tim 1:5) and a sincere dependence upon the true God (2 Tim 2:22). In Ps 51:12 (ET 51:10; LXX 50:12), David prays that God would create in him a “pure heart” after he has confessed his great sin of adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah; here the phrase means “a heart that has been purified” by God’s forgiveness. The result of this gift from God will be the proclamation of God’s ways to transgressors and sinners (Ps 51:15 [ET 51:13; LXX 50:15]). In summary, the phrase “in/with a pure heart” can refer to an innocent motive (Gen 20:5–6), to one’s standing before God as forgiven sinner Ps 51:12 (ET 51:10; LXX 50:12), or more holistically to one who is in a right standing with God and therefore engaged in love for God and others (1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22). (CC)

Commentators variously describe the force of “pure in heart” in the sixth Beatitude (Mt 5:8). Problematically, there seem to be few controls or guiding data that determine how the phrase is

understood. What is perplexing, however, is the way that scholars routinely refer to LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) as background without investigating the meaning of “pure in heart” in that psalm’s context. Since most seem to agree that LXX Psalm 23 is a helpful backdrop, it is reasonable to allow the meaning of “pure in heart” there to guide the way we understand Mt 5:8. (CC)

LXX Psalm 23 (MT/ET Psalm 24) exhibits a strong liturgical setting and tone. The third verse asks, “Who will go up to the Lord’s mountain, and who will stand in his holy place?” referring to worship at the temple on Mount Zion. Verse 4 provides the answer to the question. LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) literally reads:

The one innocent in hands and the one pure in heart [καθαρὸς τῆ καρδία],
who did not take his soul to a vain thing
and did not swear on a deceitful thing to his neighbor.

The psalm continues in verses 5–6, according to the LXX:

This one will receive blessing [εὐλογία] from the Lord
and mercy [ἐλεημοσύνη] from God, his Savior;
this is the generation of those who are seeking him,
of those who are seeking the face of the God of Jacob. (CC)

Presumably—and this is the crucial exegetical move—the two relative clauses in LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) that come after the psalmist has identified the qualified worshiper actually define what it means to be “innocent in hands” and (especially) “pure in heart.” That is to say, someone who is “pure in heart” is defined by the two relative clauses as someone “who did not take his soul to a vain thing and did not swear on a deceitful thing to his neighbor.” To what do those two relative clauses refer? We can examine their meanings first in the Hebrew of the MT, and then reflect on the Greek of the LXX. (CC)

For the first clause, the MT of Ps 24:4 reads, “who did not lift up his soul to vanity” (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִשְׂאָ לְשָׁוְיָ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה). The phrase “to lift up the soul” can mean “to long for” something (Deut 24:15; Jer 22:27). In this context, however, and in light of parallels in Pss 25:1; 86:4; 143:8, it means “look trustingly to, worship.” The prepositional phrase “to vanity” (לְשָׁוְיָ) can be adverbial, meaning “in vain” and is so used in the Second Commandment (Ex 20:7). אֲשֶׁר can also refer explicitly to an “idol” as a “vain thing” (Ps 31:6; Jonah 2:8). In the liturgical context of the psalm, this clause refers to someone who has not looked “to an idol” or to another god for help, but who desires to go up to Zion in order to worship the God of Israel, the only true God. (CC)

The second clause in MT Ps 24:4, “and (who) did not swear by deceit” (וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה), also likely refers to worship. This verb “to swear” (Niphal of נִשְׁבַּע) and the noun “deceit” (מַרְמָה) do not occur together elsewhere in the Hebrew text of Scripture. The prepositional phrase “to/by deceit” (לְמַרְמָה) may be merely adverbial here: “(who) did not swear deceitfully.” However, לְמַרְמָה is parallel to לְשָׁוְיָ, and לְשָׁוְיָ, “to a vain thing,” likely means “to an idol.” Therefore, לְמַרְמָה, “by a deceitful thing,” may be a second reference to an idol. Thus “(who) did not swear by a deceitful thing” means “(who) did not swear by an idol.” On the basis of the MT, then, the worshiper who is able to ascend to worship at Zion is precisely he who has not worshiped another god nor has engaged in syncretistic practices. Rather, he only worships and acknowledges the God of Israel and seeks blessing and mercy from him alone. (CC)

We can now consider the Greek equivalent. LXX Ps 23:4 (MT/ET 24:4) preserves the message of the Hebrew original: the person who is “pure in heart” is one “who did not take his soul to a vain thing” (ὃς οὐκ ἔλαβεν ἐπὶ ματαιῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ). The normal Greek rendering for the liturgical idiom “to lift up the soul” employs αἴρω (LXX Pss 24:1; 85:4; 142:8 [MT/ET 25:1; 86:4; 143:8]), whereas LXX Ps 23:4

uses λαμβάνω. At other times, however, the LXX translates Hebrew $\psi\eta\eta \nu\psi\eta$ with λαμβάνω ψυχή (2 Sam 14:14; Hos 4:8), so the choice of λαμβάνω does not materially affect the meaning of LXX Ps 23:4. The substantized adjective “a vain thing” (μάταιος) often has close connections to idolatry in the LXX^a and probably refers to idolatry here in LXX Ps 23:4. The second clause in LXX Ps 23:4 about a person who is “pure in heart” is that he is one “(who) did not swear by a deceitful thing to his neighbor” (οὐκ ὄμοσεν ἐπὶ δόλω τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ). The action of “swearing by a deceitful thing” also refers to worship offered to an idol; the same Greek idiom (with ἐν instead of ἐπί) pertains to idolatry in Wisdom 14:30, and similar idioms are used in LXX Jer 5:2; 7:9. (CC)

Both MT Ps 24:4 and LXX Ps 23:4, then, teach that the person who is innocent in hands and “pure in heart”—who is able to ascend Mount Zion and worship Yahweh there—is precisely the person who has been taught that there is only one God to worship and only one Lord by whom a person is to swear. People who approach with *this* purity of heart may go up to Zion and expect to receive blessing and mercy from the Lord. That is why, after all, people go up to Zion in the first place: they go up in need, confessing their sins and acknowledging that their help is in Yahweh, Israel’s God, and in him alone (see Psalms 121; 123; 130). (CC)

If this is the meaning of “pure in heart” in Psalm 24 (LXX Psalm 23), should it be used as guide for understanding Mt 5:8? There are four reasons, indeed, to let the teaching of Psalm 24 thus guide our understanding of Jesus’ words. First, the two texts share the phrase common to them alone, “pure in heart.” Second, they both involve contexts of people going up on mountains. Third, “mercy” is close at hand in the context of both—as a gift received in both LXX Ps 23:5 (MT/ET 24:5) and in Mt 5:7, the Beatitude that precedes Mt 5:8. Finally, both Ps 24:6 and Mt 5:8 evoke the promise of seeing God. The psalm envisions God’s presence in the Jerusalem temple, to which the worshiper ascends. The Beatitude envisions the final, full benefit of face-to-face communion with God in the glory of the age’s consummation in the new Jerusalem, where God’s servants “shall see his face” (Rev 22:4). (CC)

If this theology of the psalm is allowed to guide the interpretation of Mt 5:8, the following emerges: Jesus speaks Good News to those who know what it means to seek the true and living God, and to go up on his mountain to worship. He blesses, in the present time and for the Last Day, those to whom God has thus revealed himself. (CC)

Moreover, we can even be more precise in the context of this Gospel in general and of the Beatitudes in particular, where “the Lord” (3:3) is speaking authoritative blessing from his seat on the mountain (5:1). The “pure in heart” (5:8) are those who believe that the God of Israel can be found in this Jesus, who is “Immanuel,” “God is with us” (1:23). They are “pure in heart” because Jesus has called them (cf. 4:18–22), because the realities (and mysteries!) of the reign of heaven in Jesus are being revealed to them. They are not the pure in heart because they understand everything. Nevertheless, they have begun to repent and believe (4:17); they have been *given* pure hearts (Ps 51:12 [ET 51:10; LXX 50:12]). (CC)

Moreover, we may posit an important connection between the fifth (Mt 5:7) and sixth (Mt 5:8) Beatitudes. Those who have received mercy (LXX Ps 23:5 [MT/ET 24:5]) through Jesus and thus have become themselves “the merciful” (5:7) are such because they have been given pure hearts to know the face of the God of Israel in Jesus Christ. As disciples they have come to Jesus, “seeking the face of the God of Jacob” (LXX Ps 23:6 [MT/ET 24:6]). Jesus promises that on the Last Day, “they will see God” (Mt 5:8). (CC)

Those who do not worship false gods. “A pure heart ... is a single heart; and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes so neither is God seen unless that is pure by which He can be seen.” [Augsburg] (TLSB)

The “pure in heart” are those who strive for all that is true, honest, just, lovely, of good report, Christ-like (Phil. 4:8), and with singleness of purpose strive to resist and desist from the love of money, love of the world, the lust of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16). They strive to keep their hearts pure, as God is pure (1 John 3:2-3), though out of their hearts proceeds by nature all manner of evil (Mt. 15:19; Prov 20:9). Again, all such efforts in this life will fall short of perfection, but the believer in Christ makes a beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

The heart is the center of a person’s being. They have learned a singleness of devotion from Jesus, especially as he was tempted in the desert and determined to live only by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The attention here is not on the outward behavior in the sense of the Pharisees who perform their righteousness before men, but on the inward condition, which is known only to God (6:1). What is impossible for man by himself (such as purity of heart) becomes possible for him as he is in Jesus. (Scaer pp. 87-88)

Shall see God – They rely on him and his work of salvation and will see him on the last day.

The worshiper in Ps. 24 who sought the face of God experienced the coming of the King of glory (vv. 7-10). Such disciples took forward to seeing God. (TLSB)

Seeing God is reserved as an eschatological reward for the faith that God has given them.

Luther holds that this seeing is understanding God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is obtained from the Scriptures. Arndt (like others) stresses the future tense of the verb and refers “seeing God” to “the blessed eternity the Christian enters at the time of his death and which finds its consummation in the everlasting kingdom that Christ established on the Day of Judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

5:9 *the peacemakers* – Jesus would send out His disciples to bring peace to those who were worthy (10:13). (TLSB)

In the seventh blessing (5:9), Jesus continues to address those who are his disciples: “The peacemakers are blessed, because they will be called sons of God” (5:9). The exegetical task here resembles that in 5:7, namely, to work with the small number of exegetical connections that this passage has to its Matthean context. Just as the language of “mercy” (5:7) is rare in Matthew, so is the language of “peacemaking” or even simply of “peace.” The adjective here (εἰρηνοποιός) occurs nowhere else in the entire Bible. Idioms for “make/establish peace” and the term “peace,” as well as the general concept of peace, occur in Scripture often, and in a variety of contexts. Perhaps the closest verbal parallel to 5:9 is James 3:18: “And the fruit of righteousness is being sown in peace for those who make peace.” The context in James indicates that “making peace” there is occurring intramurally, that is, within the Christian assembly. (CC)

The language of “peace” is not absent from the rest of Matthew’s Gospel. It occurs again in chapter 10 in some striking ways that match up remarkably well with 5:9 if, as I have argued for the first six Beatitudes, Jesus’ blessings come in pairs. To state things in another way, what will emerge if we suppose that “the peacemakers are blessed” (5:9) and “the ones who are persecuted because of righteousness are blessed” (5:10) are in some sense paired together in meaning? Read together, 5:9–10 provides a remarkable parallel to the only other use of “peace” language in the First Gospel: the “peace” language in the Missionary Discourse of chapter 10. (CC)

As Jesus is sending out the twelve apostles to their narrowly defined ministry to the lost sheep, which are the house of Israel, he instructs them to “greet” (ἀσπάζομαι) whichever house will receive them (10:12). If that house proves to be worthy, that is, if its occupants accept the apostolic greeting, Jesus says, “Let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you” (10:13). Jesus has already given to the apostles the words that offer peace: “The reign of heaven stands near” (10:7). Those whom Jesus sends out are to bring peace to all who will receive it. This peace comes through the proclamation of the Good News of the reign of heaven in Jesus. (CC)

As the Missionary Discourse goes on to make abundantly clear, however, many will reject the message of peace and even persecute the messengers (see 10:14-18). Yet Jesus’ disciples should not be surprised, for he teaches them explicitly, “Do not think that I came so as to bring peace upon the earth. I did not come so as to bring peace, rather, a sword. For I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother” (10:34–35a). The peacemakers will at times become those who are persecuted from city to city (10:23). (CC)

I would propose that in the first place, the phrase “the peacemakers” in 5:9 refers to Jesus’ disciples as they bring the message of the reign of heaven in Jesus into the world. Not all of them will bring the Gospel in the same ways, for twelve of his disciples will be chosen to be unique apostles (10:1–4), while others will be missionaries, evangelists, or pastors, and still others will be disciples of Jesus in their ordinary vocations in life. Christ’s church exhibits many different members with different callings and offices. All, however, in their own way have the same calling to be salt and light for the world (see the commentary below on 5:13-16). The peacemaking should not be seen as limited *only* to apostolic or pastoral activity. Jesus’ disciples will be active as peacemakers in any number of ways. As the parallel in James 3:18 shows, even after disciples are made, there is ample opportunity for peace to come *again* into their midst. Further, in their worldly and godly callings, Jesus’ disciples will have opportunity to work for the restoration of wholeness in many ways. (CC)

Firstly and primarily, however, blessed are the peacemakers whom God uses to bring the message of the reign of heaven, so that others may have the peace that Jesus brings. At the fulfillment of all things, Jesus’ peacemaking disciples will be called the “sons of God” (Mt 5:9). (CC)

The eiranopoiioi are those who make peace by communicating the message of reconciliation between God and man (2 Cor 5:18-21). As people who are at peace with God are filled with His peace which passes all understanding, they strive to thwart divisions, quarrels, and hatreds, and to work for God-fearing peace between Christians, neighbors, communities, and nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Isaiah 9:6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The title of peacemaker is clearly a redemptive term applicable to God’s Messiah as the Reconciler. It means that the followers of Jesus become in him God’s instrument of reconciliation with the world. (Scaer pp. 88-89)

Shall be called sons of God – The Son of God is named the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6). Those who trust in Him are blessed by being God’s sons and daughters (Gal 3:26–28). (TLSB)

Led by the Spirit of God they are sons of God (Rom 8:14), members of his family and kingdom. God not only designates them “sons,” but actually makes them so. The bearer of the name actually is what the name says about him. The passive be named thus approaches closely the mean to be. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

5:10-12 Mt 5:9 and 5:10, the seventh and eighth Beatitudes, do go together, and the peace of the Good News in Jesus will not be welcome to many (again, see the rejection of the “peace” and the persecution in 10:12–18, 34–42). Therefore, Jesus begins the eighth Beatitude with these words: “The ones who are persecuted because of righteousness are blessed” (5:10). “Righteousness” here in 5:10 could refer to the righteous behavior of those who follow Jesus in the way of discipleship. However, owing to the parallel between “because of righteousness” (ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης) in 5:10 and Jesus’ words in 5:11, “You are blessed whenever people insult you ... *because of me*” (ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ), it is much more likely that “righteousness” in 5:10 has the same meaning as in 3:15 and 5:6, namely, God’s righteous saving deeds in Jesus. (CC)

In the eighth (5:10) and ninth (5:11–12) Beatitudes, then, Jesus completes his promise of blessing to his disciples. He describes them as those who are persecuted, insulted, the objects of slander. The dependent clause “whenever people insult you” in 5:11 makes it clear that, unlike the first seven Beatitudes (5:3–9), the final two Beatitudes (5:10–12) will not always apply to every disciple, nor will all experience such reproach in the same way. Jesus’ disciples are at all times, in themselves, “poor in spirit,” “mourning,” “lowly,” and “hungering” for God’s victory (5:3–6). By the power of their union with Jesus, his disciples have all begun to be “merciful,” “pure in heart,” and “peacemakers” (5:7–9). It will not always be the case that all of Jesus’ disciples are persecuted at all times. (CC)

When persecution for the sake of Jesus, who enacts God’s saving righteousness, does happen, Jesus promises his blessing. The reign of heaven and its blessings already belong to believers in such difficult times, just as those blessings belong to all who have nothing to offer to God, who are poor in spirit (5:3). Moreover, Jesus’ words in 5:11 invite a radical reinterpretation when his disciples are defamed and persecuted for his name’s sake. The final end-time reward that is stored up in heaven for such disciples is “great” indeed (5:12). They stand in line with God’s greatest servants of old, his “prophets” (5:12). They stand in line with Jesus, who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17; see also the second textual note on 1:22). (CC)

The final two Beatitudes prevent Jesus’ disciples, then and now, from adopting any triumphalistic ideas about the “advance of the reign of God.” The final day of victory does indeed belong to the Almighty and to his Christ. The present reign of God in Jesus, however, is a hidden reality that can only be known to those to whom it is revealed (11:25–27; 13:10–17; 16:17). Although power accompanies the ministry of Jesus and of the Twelve in Israel, the goal of Jesus’ ministry will not come with power in the way that the world thinks of such things. The forerunner of the Coming One has been arrested (4:12); he will die in the prison of the king (14:1–12). The disciples of the Coming One will at times be resisted and hated and persecuted. The Coming One himself will reign as King of the Jews and the Son of God. He will so reign, however, from a cross. Let the one who has ears hear! (CC)

5:10 *those who are persecuted for righteousness sake* – Many times the suffering that we endure is something that our own actions have brought about. This suffering spoken of here is what we experience because we have for the sake of the Gospel. It is being insulted (v. 11) because we hold to the true faith.

Jesus later warned the disciples He sent out as peacemakers (v 9) that persecution would also be their lot (10:16–22). Augustine: “Where there is no sound faith, there can be no righteousness, for the just [righteous] man lives by faith” (NPNF 1 6:7). (TLSB)

οἱ δεδιωγμένοι—Some want to give the perfect passive participle its full force: “those who have been and now still are in a condition of having been persecuted.” However, it would be wrong to claim that the perfect stem participle requires that “persecution has occurred in the past and continues in the present.” The perfect does not indicate that the past *action* is continuing. Rather, it naturally emphasizes that the

condition that results from the past action is a continuing *condition*. Rather than giving the participle its full force here, it is likely functioning more like a simple adjective, in light of the other adjectives in Mt 5:7, 8, 9. Therefore it is translated in the present tense: “the ones who *are* persecuted.” (CC)

Those who suffer ridicule, pain, refusal, punishment, loss of possessions or friends or family for doing what is right in God’s sight, as Jesus did, are (present tense) members of the kingdom of God now and forever. Membership is not gained by persecution, though persecution is the badge of Christ’s followers. The Spirit of glory and of God rests on them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

1 Peter 4:14 “If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

For righteousness sake – This easily applies to Jesus who in his persecution even to death reveals God’s salvific working among people. (Scaer p. 90)

5:11 *blessed are you* – Jesus spoke the first eight beatitudes using the third person [they]. In this final beatitude, He addressed His disciples directly using the second person [you] for emphasis. He continued using “you” until 7:13. (TLSB)

Pro my account – The disciple of Jesus will be like him in being Satan’s target. The cause of the believer’s difficulty is Jesus, for whose sake they are persecuted. (Scaer p. 90)

All kinds of evil against you falsely – καὶ εἰπῶσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθύμῳν [ψευδόμενοι]—The predicate position participle ψευδόμενοι may perhaps express means, telling how people will say every evil against the disciples: “by lying.” (CC)

“Troubles are not always punishments for certain past deeds, but they are God’s works, intended for our benefit, and that God’s power might be made more apparent in our weakness.” [Ap XIIB 63 – TLSB]

In the final analysis, this is the same as the phrase “because of righteousness” (V. 10), since the Christian does right for the sake of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:18-23; 3:16-17; 4:14-16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

5:12 *rejoice and be glad* – This is the kind of reaction that is described in the definition of the word “Blessed.”

The source of joy for a disciple who suffers persecution is the promise of heaven. (TLSB)

Reward is great – Heaven is the ultimate reward. Knowing that we are going to heaven even gives a joy and peace here on earth.

Though Jesus used this term when referring to heavenly blessings, He taught that the reward would be based on God’s goodness, not the amount of work done (cf 20:1–15). Any reward our heavenly Father gives is an expression of His grace. “We confess that eternal life is a reward; it is something due because of the promise, not because of our merits” (Ap V 242). John Hus: “When [a disciple] has patiently continued to endure[,] it helps to purify him as tools [purify] iron, and fire gold, and it helps to increase his reward of beatitude” (*The Church*, p 270). (TLSB)

While this is clearly in the future, it is already a reality in the heavens (God’s presence). (Scaer p. 91)

The Authority of the Beatitudes: The Gospel Doorway

Let the one who has ears hear indeed (11:15; 13:9, 43)! As the commentary above on the structure of the Sermon suggested, the shift from third person address (5:3–10) to second person address (5:11–12) shows that the Gospel blessings of the Beatitudes are the “doorway” into the remainder of the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5–7). The “they” of Beatitudes 1–8 (5:3–10) becomes the “you” of Beatitude 9 (5:11–12), which is continued in the “you” of the rest of the Sermon through 7:20, referring to those who believe in the promise of present and future blessing that Jesus here teaches with authority. (CC)

To summarize this lengthy treatment of the Beatitudes, they do not make ethical demands, nor do they primarily exhort. They do not refer directly to Jesus himself. Rather, the subject of the main clause in every verse describes those whom Jesus has called to be his disciples. The first group of four blessings addresses Jesus’ disciples in terms of their own innate emptiness (5:3–6). Left to themselves, apart from Christ, disciples (and all people) are “poor in spirit” and “lowly,” given only to “mourning” and to “hungering.” If one were to ask, “Where is Jesus?” with regard to the first four blessings, the answer would be, “In the ὅτι (‘because ...’) clauses!” Those who have no resources to offer God are nevertheless eschatologically blessed, “because” Jesus has come to reign over such persons in grace and mercy, “because” the promised end-time blessings will come to those who have nothing besides God-given faith in Jesus. He is the Servant of Yahweh, proclaiming Good News to the poor! (CC)

The second group of Beatitudes (5:7–12) still describes the disciples of Jesus: the merciful, the pure in heart, and so forth. These blessings testify that Jesus’ call to discipleship begins to transform those who are called (5:7–12). When Jesus joins men, women, and children to himself, that union begins to manifest the life of Christ himself in the lives of his disciples. That was true for Jesus’ original disciples there on the mountain in Galilee. It is also true for the disciples of Jesus today, who are baptized into union with Christ and who comprise his church, which hears and receives the Beatitudes in faith. Indeed, the Beatitudes contain within themselves the kerygmatic power to *make* a hearer or reader into a disciple of Jesus and a member of his church. To hear and believe that one is poor in spirit, spiritually bankrupt, and then to hear Jesus pronounce blessing and the promise of the reign of heaven can make one into a believer in Jesus. Hearing and believing the Beatitudes can also sustain that faith. When life is hard and the power of evil is too great, Jesus’ words comfort us: “The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!” (5:3). (CC)

At this point, and only at this point, a person is ready to hear the teaching of Jesus in the body proper of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ teaching will continue to have the character of *divine, authoritative revelation*. He reveals truth about the disciples’ calling, about the true meaning of God’s OT Torah, about life under the Father’s care, and so on. Aspects of this truth concern God’s will for man’s obedience. The Sermon contains Law, the commandments of God as Jesus declares them. Sooner or later, that Law, when taken seriously by men and women trying to obey it, will rise up to condemn Jesus’ disciples as guilty, as sinful—as poor in spirit. At those times, Jesus’ disciples are invited to remember that the Sermon has a doorway, a doorway that in the first place swings open on this hinge: “The poor in spirit are blessed, because the reign of heaven is theirs!” (5:3). In this way, perhaps many times in a single day, Jesus’ disciples will receive and enter and accept his authoritative revelation. In the first place (literally!), however, his authoritative revelation is his word of promise, of present blessing and final salvation to all his disciples. (CC)

5:1–12 Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God’s gracious gifts to those who repent of their sins and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God’s goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of His sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship

only the true God, then we are blessed, now and forever. • Gracious Savior, keep my eyes ever focused on You and Your blessings, which are mine by grace alone. Amen. (TLSB)