

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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

4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

11:4-6 In contrast with what the Israelites had experienced in Egypt, the wilderness was a completely different setting with new hardships. The food they had brought from Egypt more than a year earlier was now long gone, leading them to un-thankfulness. Luther: “We may know and judge how full the world is nowadays of false preachers and false saints, who fill the ears of the people with preaching good works. There are indeed a few who teach them how to do good works, but the greater part preach human doctrines and works that they themselves have devised and set up... These men are parasites and hirelings; slave, not sons; aliens, not heirs. They turn themselves into idols, whom God is to love and praise and for whom He is to do the very things they ought to do for Him. They have no spirit, nor is God their Savior. His good gifts are their Savior, and with them God must serve them as their lackey. They are the Children of Israel, who were not content in the desert eating bread from heaven, but wanted meat, onions, and garlic, too (Num:4-6)” (TLSB)

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

Lit, “the gathered ones,” a unique term in Hbr Scripture. Likely non-Israelite slaves who escaped with the Israelites and believed in the Lord because of the miracles and plagues. (TLSB)

These were non-Israelites who had followed them out of Egypt. They did not know the Lord and unfortunately misled those who did know the Lord. These are mentioned in Exodus 12:38. Because they have little or no knowledge of God or faith in him, they are quick to react poorly to difficult situations. It shows how easy it is for Christians to be swept along by the world and its cravings.

Acts 17:5 “But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.”

had a strong craving – The history of man-kind is that of never fully appreciating what they have been given and always looking for something better instead of being thankful (Adam & Eve, David & Bathsheba, Solomon, Judas).

Luke 17:17-18 “Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Romans 1:21 “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

oh that we had meat to eat! As in Ex 16, the people began to complain about their diet, forgetting what God had done for them (see Ps 106:14). Certainly meat was not their common fare when they were slaves in Egypt. Now that they were in a new type of distress, the people romanticized the past and minimized its discomforts. (CSB)

This is the same as Exodus 16. They forgot several things: (1) What God had done for them, and (2) that they didn't have it all that good in Egypt and very likely didn't have much meat there either.

They still had their herds and flocks, but the consumption of meat from these animals had to be reduced in the wilderness; moreover, their appetite was whetted for other delicacies. (Kretzmann)

11:5 *fish ... cucumbers ... garlic.* Suggestive of the varieties of foods available in Egypt, in contrast to the diet of manna in the desert. (CSB)

The Egyptian text "In Praise of the City Ramses" celebrates a similar bounty in a food list. Fish was an important source of protein for Egyptians and Israelites. (TLSB)

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

11:7-9 Moses illustrates just how fine the Lord's provision was for His people. (TLSB)

11:7 *manna.* Several naturalistic explanations for the manna have been given. For example, some equate it with the sticky and often granular honeydew that is excreted in Sinai in early June by various scale insects and that solidifies rapidly through evaporation. But no naturally occurring substance fits all the data of the text, and several factors suggest that manna was in fact the Lord's unique provision for his people in the desert: 1. The meaning of the Hebrew word for "manna" suggests that it was something unknown by the people at the time. 2. The appearance and taste of the manna (see Ex 16:31) suggest that it is not something experienced by other peoples in other times. 3. The daily abundance of the manna and its regular periodic surge and slump (double amounts on the sixth day but none on the seventh day, Ex 16:22, 27) hardly fit a natural phenomenon. 4. Its availability in ample supply for the entire desert experience, no matter where the people were (Ex 16:35), argues against a natural substance. 5. The keeping of a sample of the manna in the ark for future generations (Ex 16:33-34) suggests that it was a unique food. (CSB)

10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. **11** Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? **12** Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,' to the land that you swore to give their fathers? **13** Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' **14** I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. **15** If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."

11:10 *at the door of his tent* – The contagion of dissatisfaction had spread throughout the camp like a virulent pestilence. (Kretzmann)

The people's discontent led to discontent between the Lord and Moses. (TLSB)

anger of the Lord blazed hotly. The rejection of his gracious gift of heavenly food (called "bread from heaven" in Ex 16:4) angered the Lord. God had said that the reception of the manna by the people would be a significant test of their obedience (Ex 16:4). In view of the good things he was to give them (10:32), the people were expected to receive each day's supply of manna as a gracious gift of a merciful

God, and a promise of abundance to come. In spurning the manna, the people had spurned the Lord. They had failed the test of faith. (CSB)

This was more than a diet issue. God had given them manna as a test of their faith in him and they had failed badly. By grumbling about manna they were also rebelling against God which was a much larger problem. It meant that they did not trust his promises.

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

With this second outbreak of dissatisfaction, Moses felt the whole wrath of God in his inmost soul, and he feared that his entire mission was a failure. (Kretzmann)

Even God's selected leader became overwhelmed by this problem. Instead of leading, he too, complained to God about his lot in life. Verses 11-15 detail Moses' complaints.

11:11–15 A prayer of distress and complaint, filled with urgency, irony and passion. (CSB)

11:11 *why* – He felt that the care of the entire people in governing and leading them was so grievous as to seem an unmerciful treatment on the part of God. This was the language of despondency, not of the kind that murmurs against the Lord in secret, but of that which seeks help and strength from Him alone. It is the complaint of weakness, but not the grumbling of unbelief. (Kretzmann)

Israel's complaints stretched Moses' patience to the breaking point and caused him to complain, resembling Israel's murmurings and weeping. Because Moses turned to the Lord in his feelings of insufficiency and frustration, his complaint did not degenerate into rebellion. (TLSB)

11:12 *Did I conceive all this people?* The implication is that the Lord conceived the people of Israel, that he was their nurse and that their promises were his. Moses asks that he be relieved of his mediatorial office, for "the burden is too heavy for me" (v. 14; cf. Elijah, 1Ki 19). Even death, Moses asserts (v. 15), would be preferable to facing the continuing complaints of the people. (CSB)

It was not natural, it was not meet that Moses should bear the responsibility for the entire people alone; he meant to imply that God, as the Creator and Father of Israel, Ex. 4, 22; Is. 63, 16, should make some provision by which he, a poor weak man, might be relieved of his great burden. (Kretzmann)

This is irony. The Lord had provided Moses with his own mother as a nurse (Ex. 2:7-9) and had stayed with Moses throughout the recent struggle from Midian to Egypt to Sinai. (TLSB)

11:13 *weep before me* – They behaved like screaming, self-willed infants, who will not listen to reason. (Kretzmann)

11:14 *I am not able to carry* – His feeble strength could not hold up the burden which had been laid upon him. (Kretzmann)

11:14 Note Jethro's advice to Moses in Ex 18. (TLSB)

11:15 *kill me* – Death would be a merciful deliverance in the circumstances. This great misfortune, which would surely kill him by inches. The experience of Moses and his manner of acting is that of many spiritual leaders of the people to this day, if all their efforts in behalf of the souls entrusted to them meet

with little or no appreciation. Fortunate is the man who at that time turns to the Lord, even with an importunate prayer, and lays the matter entirely in the hands of Him who rules all things. (Kretzmann)

Moses reached a new level of distress, different from that experienced earlier. (TLSB)

11:1–15 The grumbling begins only three days into the journey. Perhaps aching muscles or sore feet cause their discomfort. God provides guidance to the Promised Land and manna to eat on the way; in return for His love, He receives grumbling. Sometimes, obeying God causes pain and suffering. When tempted to grumble, think of Christ at Gethsemane and how He turned His pains into prayers. Meditate on how He willingly submitted to the Father’s will for the sake of our salvation (Mt 26:39). • “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds In a believer’s ear! It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, And drives away our fear. It makes the wounded spirit whole And calms the heart’s unrest; ’Tis manna to the hungry soul And to the weary, rest.” Amen. (LSB 524:1–2) (TLSB)

24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. 26 Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” 28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” 29 But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

11:24 *went out* – Namely, from the Tabernacle, where he had brought his complaint before the Lord. (Kretzmann)

on the seventy elders – Possibly the same men chosen on Jethro’s advice (cf Ex 18:21; 24:1). (TLSB)

11:25 *Spirit rested on them* – This is how he had been with them as they left Egypt and would continue to show his presence in this manner. His presence today can be found as we come to church and receive his gifts in the Word and Sacraments.

Matthew 17:5 “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Luke 21:27 “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

they prophesied. † The Hebrew verb here is not in the form in which it is usually found to express the mediation of a prophetic message through the Spirit. It probably means that they gave ecstatic expression to an intense religious experience (see 1Sa 10:5–6; 18:10; 19:20–24; 1Ki 18:29). (CSB)

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

God supplies all that we need. Jesus did not leave his disciples or us alone when he ascended into heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit. He has given us the Spirit through Baptism and we have the strength to live for him as we daily remember our Baptism.

This filled them with the same wisdom and understanding which characterized Moses, though not in the same degree. (Kretzmann)

did not continue. It seems that the temporary gift of prophecy to the elders was primarily to establish their credentials as Spirit-empowered leaders. (CSB)

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

The word for prophecy means to speak or sing something inspirationally. This was not like the prophets who taught and foretold events, but more of an emotional lift for that particular situation. Here, too, God provided what was needed to help Moses and the Israelites get past this problem.

11:26 *remained in the camp* – They had not made it to the consecration rite. (TLSB)

registered. It implies a written record. (TLSB)

11:28 *Joshua...stop them* – Joshua feared that Eldad and Medad were assuming authority in competition with Moses (a threat that would arise in ch. 16). However, Moses assured him that the Lord gives His Spirit under various conditions for the same purpose (cf Lk 9:49-50). (TLSB)

11:29 Moses reiterates his exhaustion due to leadership (vv 11–15). (TLSB)

Are you jealous for my sake? Here the true spirit of Moses is demonstrated. Rather than being threatened by the public demonstration of the gifts of the Spirit by Eldad and Medad, Moses desired that all God’s people might have the full gifts of the Spirit (cf. Php 1:15–18). This verse is a fitting introduction to the inexcusable challenge to Moses’ leadership in ch. 12. (CSB)

As a true servant of God, who was not jealous for his own honor, but desired only the extension of God’s influence and power, Moses wished only for a further extension of the Lord’s gift of grace. A little more of this same Spirit in our days would help to solve many of the problems of the Church. (Kretzmann)

1 Corinthians 10:33 “even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.”

all ... prophets. Fulfilled at Pentecost (Ac 2). Even so, the Lord provides His people with leaders (Eph 4:8–16). (TLSB)

11:30 *returned to camp* – They all returned to their own tents, which were at some distance from the Tabernacle. Moses had his assistants, and he felt the relief. At present the Lord also gives understanding and wisdom to the men that are holding various offices in the Church, if they but use proper meekness in their work.

11:16–30 Earlier, we learned of Moses’ helplessness as Israel’s leader—one man amid a throng of rebellious people. Mercifully, God grants 70 elders to help Moses. Like Moses, you may at times feel frustration and become angry with the Lord. Thanks be to God, He is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ps 86:15). In His mercy, the Lord provides for you and calls you to repentance and faith through His faithful servants. • Lord, You command us to call upon You in times of trouble, and You promise to deliver us. We thank You for hearing our prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – James 5:13-20

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. 19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

5:13-14 What to do while waiting? Deal with personal problems. Be ready; pray. If you have a problem, put it into God's hands. Don't suffer alone. Suffering in the time of James, including persecution, was genuine. By the Christian's prayer, God is given the problem of the saint. The Christian then knows that the one he thinks has abandoned him knows the Christian's afflictions because of God's promises to hear our prayer. The cheerful rejoice—indeed, in songs or prayers of praise. The sick call out to the pastors of the Church to pray for them. The faith of the believer places his trust in God; thus the prayers are acceptable. The prayer of faith is prayed, believing that God will answer. Faith puts its trust in Jesus; therefore, such a faith is always praying (1 Thess 5:17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

5:13-14 *suffering?... cheerful?... sick?* In all circumstances, good or bad, Christians call upon God and trust in His provision, acknowledging that all things happen by His will (cf 4:13–17). (CC)

5:14 *elders*. Leaders among God's people, in both OT (Ex 19:7; 24:1) and NT (Ac 11:30; Ti 1:5); sometimes refers to pastors. (TLSB)

oil. One of the best-known ancient medicines (referred to by Philo, Pliny and the physician Galen; see also Isa 1:6; Lk 10:34). Some believe that James may be using the term medicinally in this passage. Others, however, regard its use here as an aid to faith, an outward sign of the healing to be brought about by God in response to "prayer offered in faith" (v. 15; see Mk 6:13). (CSB)

Anointing is a physical sign accompanying the prayer much like incense is Levitical worship (Ex. 30). In the ancient world, oil was used for medicinal purposes (cf. Lk 10:34). Here it is placed on the person while praying, marking that person as one set apart for God's care. A similar practice is described in Mk. 6:13. The anointing oil in Ex. 30:22-31 had a similar function, marking certain items as holy, dedicated to God. (TLSB)

in the name of the Lord. Indicating that it is the Lord who heals, according to His will. (TLSB)

5:15 *prayer of faith*. Prayer spoken from faith (cf 1:6). (TLSB)

save. Gk word can mean "heal," which is more appropriate here, though salvation is also in view in v 16. (TLSB)

raise him up. Make him better physically (Mk 2:9; Lk 7:14), but also with a view toward the ultimate goal of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. So in Ac 3:1–4:22, Peter raised up the lame man and announced that by the name of Jesus "whom God raised from the dead" (3:15; 4:10) the man was healed. (TLSB)

James is in eschatological thought. He uses future tense, “the prayer of faith will save.” Salvation is in this fullness, though it is yet to be completed. Christ has paid the price, the promise is bestowed, but it will “be completed by God at His own choosing” (David P. Scaer, *James, the Apostle of Faith* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983], 133). “Raise him up” is a promise of the Last Day, not of a certain physical cure. The sick and the oppressed ought to focus on the ultimate deliverance of salvation and resurrection and not on the present trials. Indeed, he will raise him up, for he has shed his blood to provide the forgiveness of sins. Of that we can be sure! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

committed sins, he will be forgiven. Illness is sometimes a consequence of specific sins (Dt 28:58–62; 1Co 11:29–30), but not always (Jn 9:1–3). Still, sickness and death are consequences of our general fallen condition. In Christ, God is able to heal our bodies, which He will raise up on the Last Day. (TLSB)

5:16 *confess your sins to one another.* “Here the reference is not to confession made to priests, but is the reconciliation of brothers to each other. Confession should be mutual” (Ap XIIB 12). God directs us to confess our sins to others as to Him, and to forgive sins in His name. The confession of sins to one another is implied in Mt 18:15–16. Cf Mk 1:5; 1Jn 1:9. Luther: “Conduct yourselves in such a way that each humbles himself before the other and confesses his guilt, if he has offended someone” (AE 36:356). (TLSB)

Prayer and confession of sins is not just for the sick, but for the whole Christian life, not just during the life-threatening incidents. The call is to the Church to confess her sins one to another and to pray, praying for one another, asking God’s forgiveness after confessing. God has been offended by the behavior of those who disregard others, previously mentioned through the Epistle. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Rather than leaving the saints feeling abandoned, James directs them to confession and prayer with the assurance once again that they have God’s abundant grace in Christ Jesus. For their sin he died; for their forgiveness he rose—and he still cares for them and will care for them to all eternity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

righteous person. One who is righteous by faith; same as one who prays “in faith” (Jas 1:6; cf 5:15). (TLSB)

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” Scaer suggests this paraphrase: “The prayer engendered by God in the man whom He has justified is extremely effective” (Scaer, 134). Prayer is indeed God’s work in the believer. He has made us his own people. Justification is not our work, but God’s! He creates faith in us and enables us to live in faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 19, Part 4)

power. God’s response to prayer, which accomplishes what human will and strength cannot. Luther: “The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects’ if it is serious and persistent.... God intends to test you to see whether you can hold on tight, and to teach you that your prayer is not displeasing to Him or unheard, simply because His answer is delayed and you are permitted to go on seeking and knocking” (AE 21:234–35). (TLSB)

5:17-18 *nature like ours.* Human and a sinner. (TLSB)

did not rain ... gave rain. God’s power was seen in His answer to sinful Elijah’s prayer. (TLSB)

5:17 *Elijah ... prayed.* That Elijah prayed may be assumed from 1Ki 17:1; 18:41–46. The three and a half years (see also Lk 4:25) are probably a round number (half of seven), based on 1Ki 18:1 (see note there; cf. Rev 11:1–6). (CSB)

5:19-20 Summarizes the entire Letter. (TLSB)

Finally, James urges the pastors to deal with their erring brothers. Those who wander from the truth were those who were denying some truth of the faith. Those who went and dealt with their false teaching would rescue not only the erring, but also their congregations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

5:19 *wanders from the truth.*† Fall into any error—either in doctrine or in Christian living. (CSB)

Strays from right teaching (“word of truth”; 1:18) and right living (“false to the truth”; 3:14). (TLSB)

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

5:20 *his soul.* Of the sinner who is brought back. (TLSB)

from death. The person left in sin will die in sin (1:15; cf 5:15). (TLSB)

cover over a multitude of sins. The sins of the wanderer will be forgiven by God. (CSB)

More than we can number; God forgives all our sins. (TLSB)

5:12–20 James has been calling sinners to repentance, and here he exhorts the entire congregation to do the same. No aspect of our lives is private, only between “me and God.” We hide behind facades of perfection, but sin and its consequences pervade every aspect of our lives. Left on our own, we would perish. But our Lord has given us a community of fellow saints to hear our confession, pray for our needs, and restore us when we err. We hear His Gospel from them. God continuously sends into our lives those who pray for us, sing praise with us, and speak God’s words of forgiveness to us. As His people, healed in body and soul, we may approach His throne of grace with confidence. • I place my life into Your hands, Lord. Save me, heal me, and use my voice to praise You, to pray for my brothers and sisters, and to speak Your forgiving Word. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark9:38-50

38 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” 39 But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

9:38-50 This Gospel immediately follows last week’s (see previous sermon study). Its thrust is related, but it is not identical. In vv 30–37 Jesus warns against trying to become great the way the world does. In this Sunday’s text, he is concerned about the pride that moves his followers to condemn—and potentially exclude—others, while they go easy on themselves. Jesus points out that it actually ought to be the other way around (cf. also the Epistle). They should be grateful for what God does in them and in others. At the same time, they need to discipline themselves, realizing that the way they live today has eternal consequences. Keep in mind that these admonitions follow the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah on

the Mount of Transfiguration (9:2–12). The disciples' conduct is to reflect that Jesus is their Redeemer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

- Verses 38-41 are paralleled at Luke 9:49-50 in shorter form; (Buls)
- Verses 42-47 are paralleled at Matthew 18:6-9 and Luke 17:1-2; (Buls)
- Verses 48-50 are peculiar to Mark. (Buls)

Textual matters:

- a. Verses 44 and 46 are not found in the best manuscripts. Nor in modern translations. (Buls)
- b. Verse 38: the words "and he followeth not us (KJV)" are not found in the best manuscripts and are therefore omitted by RSV, NEB, BECK, NIV and NASB. (Buls)
- c. Verse 49: Nestle's Greek text reading is the preferred reading followed by the five translations mentioned above. On this verse the UBS Textual Commentary states: "At a very early period a scribe, having found in Leviticus 2:13 a clue to the meaning of Jesus' enigmatic statement, wrote the OT passage in the margin of his copy of Mark. In subsequent copyings the marginal gloss was either substituted for the words of the text, or was added to the text." (Buls)

Verses 38-41 form a unit. 42 is transitional. Verses 43-50 form a second unit. (Buls)

9:38 *we tried to stop him*. The disciples were protecting their exclusive status with Jesus. (TLSB)

not following us. The man apparently was a believer, but he was not one of the exclusive company of the Twelve. Nevertheless he acted in Jesus' name and had done what the disciples, on at least one occasion, had not been able to do (see vv. 14–18, 28). (CSB)

There is no conjunction or particle. John interrupts Jesus. What he says indicates that he was not sure whether he had done the right thing. "We were trying to prevent him." Note that he says "us" not "you." He judges simply by membership in the circle of the disciples, who had been commanded to drive out devils. (Buls)

Adolf Schlatter (*Die Evangelien nach Markus and Lukas* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961] 96) believes that John objected to the man driving out demons because the man's efforts were incomplete and only half-right. There may be envy at work here, too, since that man seemed to be functioning in an unauthorized, unofficial way (cf. Joshua in the OT Reading). The conative imperfect *ekōluomen* indicates that the disciples tried to hinder the man's actions (BDF § 326). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

We saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." The "us" (*hēmin*) may show elitism on the part of the disciples, but the unnamed exorcist is able to do what the disciples could not (9:18). Though he is not a part of the Twelve, he must believe because "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (9:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Numbers 11:27-29, "27 A young man ran and told Moses, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' 28 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, 'Moses, my lord, stop them!' 29 But Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!'"

The assurance that a special and intimate relationship exists between Jesus and the Twelve (verse 37) prompted John to call Jesus attention to an unsuccessful attempt to prevent an unauthorized use of His power and name by an anonymous exorcist. This is the only time when Mark calls attention to John alone. It is striking, however, that after each of the three major prophecies of the passion the evangelist inserts the response of one of the three disciples who were closest to Jesus: Peter (8:32f), John (9:38), and James, with John (10:35-37). Mark shows in this way that even the most privileged of the disciples failed to understand what the passion signified for their life and mission. The use of the first person plural (“we saw...we forbade him...not following us”) indicates that John was speaking for all of the disciples. (Lane)

The irony of John’s disclosure, at this point in the narrative, is that in chapter 9:14-18 the disciples themselves had been powerless in a situation involving demonic resistance to exorcism. The action of the Twelve toward a stranger who was effective in exercising Jesus’ power only points to their own ineptness and lack of understanding. The Twelve had an unduly narrow perspective toward the work of God. The man had grasped that an essential dimension of Jesus’ mission was the confrontation and defeat of Satan. (Lane)

9:39 *Do not stop him.* Jesus’ view of discipleship was far more inclusive than the narrow view held by the Twelve. (CSB)

"Stop preventing him" likely indicates that the man is still doing so. "In the next moment" is "in the same breath." "Say anything bad" or "speak evil" means "he believes in Me." (Buls)

Exorcism, a divine work that should be stopped. One who worked good in God’s name would not curse His name. (TLSB)

Contrary to John’s expectation, Jesus sides with the “unauthorized” man: give him the benefit of the doubt! The Lord is patient enough to put up with imperfections. He is prepared to commend even those who have a long way to go, but in whom God’s Spirit has obviously done some work. Moses in Numbers 11 reflects this same attitude. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

9:40 This verse seems to contradict the severe statement of Mt. 12:30, “He who is not for me is against me.” Actually, they are not as contradictory as they might seem, because they speak of different situations. Matthew’s passage warns the hearer against the danger of his own half-hearted commitment. This one in Mark seeks to prevent arrogance towards those who have not yet “arrived,” and inspire gratitude for what the Lord has done in the lives of others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Though the man was not part of Jesus’ traveling company, the blessed result of his casting out demons in Jesus’ name parallels what Paul saw happening during his imprisonment in Rome (Phil 1:15–18): Jesus is being proclaimed. Notice, however, the significant difference between this case and the one Jesus warns against so sternly in Mt 12:30. When one is not “against us,” that is, this particular entourage of believers, he may in fact still be “for us”—still a part of the Church. But when it comes to a relationship with not just this particular assembly but with Jesus himself, a single, unmistakable position is required: “Whoever is not *with me* is [indeed!] against me.” Neutrality regarding Jesus himself is opposition to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

This verse states a Christian axiom. Note Matthew 12:30, an opposite thought, found in a context of those who reject Jesus. The use of "us" in verse 40 includes Jesus. In verse 38 it obviously excludes Jesus. Both this verse and Matthew 12:30 tell us that no one can be neutral to Jesus. (Buls)

The sharp recognition of only two sides (“against us” and “for us”) radicalizes the demand to welcome participation in the mission, even from unexpected quarters. If committed, he cannot work against it at the same time. (Lane)

9:41 *whoever gives you a cup of water.* God remembers even small acts of kindness extended to believers because they are believers. (CSB)

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

This explanation cites a specific case which however is general. Intended sense: a deed, no matter how insignificant, done "on the ground that you are Christ's" will always be rewarded. That is the attitude they should have toward such as are mentioned in verses 38-39, not an attitude of exclusion. (Buls)

What a contrast to John’s concern in verse 38! While John was upset about the man doing good because he was “unofficial,” Jesus says that even the smallest act of kindness done for His followers will be rewarded. He wants to engender an appreciative and encouraging attitude towards those whom the disciples may readily dismiss as weak. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The offering of a cup of water to quench the biting thirst induced by the burning heat of the eastern sun is an act of hospitality (cf. v 37) as well as an example of the humble service commended to the disciples in verse 35. It becomes a significant act when the drink is offered to a man because he is a disciple and belongs to Jesus. This statement presupposes the same frame of reference integral to verse 37, that the emissary of a man is as the man himself, and what is done to emissary is done to the one who sent him. (Lane)

his reward. Including God’s approval. (CSB)

9:38–41 Jesus opens the disciples’ eyes to see those who do God’s work in dramatic or simple ways. The work of God goes far beyond us. He shows His power and kindness through great life-changing miracles and simple cups of water. • Lord, thank You for Your work through the lives of others. Lead me to welcome those miracles and mercies that You show through every one of Your people. Amen. (TLSB)

Causing to Sin

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. **43** And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. **45** And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. **47** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, **48** ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ **49** For everyone will be salted with fire. **50** Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

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

The very opposite of verse 37 and a glaring contrast with verse 41. It is a general statement covering all instances of this kind. "Cause to sin" is "to entrap." NEB: "Leads astray." "Believe in Me" surely means faith in Christ. Little children can believe. KJV, RSV and NASB make the apodosis a contrary to fact condition "and had been cast into the sea." Grammars argue about the meaning of "if" or "that" here. It makes little difference. The meaning is clear: "Better to die a violent and cruel death than to cause one of these little believers to sin." Christians *must* control their flesh so as not to mislead others. (Buls)

The Lord intensifies his remarks about accepting the weak. He is so serious about embracing "these little ones who believe in me" that causing them to sin (*skandalizō*, "cause to fall, offend, entrap") will elicit severe punishment. Although "little ones" can certainly include children, it is better in this context not to exclude adults who may be new to the faith or immature. As William Lane observes, "The stern warning has immediate relevance for those who had sought to prevent the exercise of faith in Jesus' name" (*The Gospel of Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 345). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

skandalisēi, "cause to sin," literally "to fall (from faith)." *mikrōn*, "little ones," believers, not just children. *mulos*, "millstone," denotes the type of grinding stone so heavy that it must be turned by a donkey. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The stern warning has immediate relevance for those who had sought to prevent the exercise of faith in Jesus name, and corresponds in severity to the word addressed to Peter when he sought to turn Jesus from the path of obedience (8:33). (Lane)

On the other hand, if anyone scandalizes, offends, causes one of these little ones that believe on Christ, especially also little children, to do wrong or to get an impression which will cause such a person to think less highly of Christ and of the Christian Church, this is an offense which the Lord cannot condemn too strongly. Far better, He says, It would be for such a person to be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck before such an offense is committed. Here a grave responsibility is placed upon all parents, teachers, and all whose duty brings them into contact with children and with such as are small in the kingdom of God, the Christians that are weak in Christian knowledge. (Kretzmann)

millstone. A heavy stone slab turned by a donkey in grinding grain. (CSB)

9:43-48 Of course, the tendency to "scandalize" or cause others to sin begins with a weakness in ourselves. While we ought to accept others despite their shortcomings, we need to be strong and self-disciplined in combating our own sinful tendencies. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The fact that Jesus says the same thing three times about various body parts underlines the seriousness of the matter. If hands, feet, or eyes really were the cause of evil in us, we should not hesitate to part with them, since living a handicapped life in this world isn't nearly as frightful as spending eternity in hell, described here in the terms of Is 66:24 as everlasting punishment with a worm that never finishes chewing and a fire that is never done burning its victim. To be sure, the parts of our body are not really the seat of evil in us; the point is that we ought to keep a close eye on sin in our life and stop it before it flourishes. Thus, we who often are rough on others should be much rougher on ourselves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Hyperbole, as Scripture forbids self-mutilation (Lev 19:28; Deut 14:1; 1 Cor 6:19–20; et al.). These verses teach that participation in the kingdom is worth any price or sacrifice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

9:43 Nothing is more important than faith unto eternal life. (TLSB)

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

life. Eternal life in the presence of God. (CSB)

hell. The Greek word for “hell” is *geena* from Hebrew name for the Hinnom Valley southwest of Jerusalem, where humans were sacrificed (2 Ch. 28:3; 33:6) and garbage was dumped (2 Ki. 23:10). Fire was constantly present in the Hinnom Valley due to sacrifices and burning trash; this became a figure for the everlasting fire of hell, as the ESV translation suggests. Used only in Mark (vv. 43, 45, 47). (TLSB)

Verses 43-47 (with 44 and 46 omitted) comprise a three-fold warning to the Christian with reference to self: (Buls)

- a. These words do not condone self-mutilation and therefore are not to be taken literally. If they were taken literally we would soon have no members left, for our flesh tempts us often. They are sternest law: drown all lust and temptation immediately. Note the three aorist imperatives in 43, 45 and 47. (Buls)
- b. The warning not to scandalize others occurs only once, verse 42, but the warning not to scandalize self is given thrice. (Buls)
- c. "To enter life," verse 43, occurs again in 45 and 47. "Enter the Kingdom" is the eschatological Kingdom of God in heaven. The word "life" occurs four times in Mark, twice here and at 10:17,30. It reminds one of the very frequent use in John's Gospel. (Buls)
- d. "Go into hell," verse 43, he enters hell on his own accord but in 45 and 47 we note that he has no choice. The word used for hell here "geenna," in verses 43, 45 and 47 always means "hell" in the New Testament. (Buls)

9:44, 46 Christ here mentions some other members that are very apt to offend, to commit sin, to lead others into sin. The law of sin is always active in our members. Here it is necessary that a person keep these members in subjection. For the Lord speaks figuratively and does not want to be understood, as Luther says, that He here advocates physical mutilation or dismemberment, since that would obviously not take the sin and the desire to sin out of the heart. It is the heart which must be controlled by the spirit of love toward Christ and our neighbor, in order that the hand, the foot, the eye do not perform that which sin desires them to do. Whosoever places his members into the service of sin, of uncleanness, and unrighteousness here in this life, will hereafter pay the penalty for such transgression in all eternity. But whosoever, with the help of the Holy Ghost, brings his members into subjection, trains them, holds his desires in check, does not permit sin to reign in his body, he will retain faith and a good conscience, he will keep body and soul unto life eternal. (Kretzmann)

9:47 *kingdom of God.* See note on Mt 3:2. (CSB)

Heaven and eternal life in contrast to eternal death. (TLSB)

9:48 Isa 66:24 speaks of the punishment for rebellion against God. As the final word of Isaiah's message, the passage became familiar as a picture of endless destruction.(CSB)

worm does not die. Worms were always present in the rubbish dump. (CSB)

The torments of hell. (TLSB)

"Their" is the damned in hell. Hell is pictured as everlasting internal corruption and putrefaction and external torture. Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:9, eternal objects of God's wrath. (Buls)

Verses 42-48 are a stern warning. Who is not guilty and who does not need warning? (Buls)

"Their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched," quoted from Is 66:24.

Note: This passage makes such a deep impression on account of the earnestness of the Savior and because of His solemn reference to the fire of hell, and to the worm that will not die, and to the fire that will not be quenched. The fires of the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where all the refuse of the city was burned, were commonly taken as a type of the fires of hell. As these fires burned without ceasing, day and night, so the fires of hell will offer no respite. And as the worms were continually feeding on the remains of carcasses and refuse that was dumped out into that valley, so some of the torments of hell will be like the ceaseless gnawing of worms. To try to crack jokes at the expense of the doctrine of hell, or to deny this doctrine outright, for the flimsiest reasons, is decidedly blasphemous in view of such passages as the present and Luke 16, 28. (Kretzmann)

9:49† The saying may mean that everyone who enters hell will suffer its fire, or (if only loosely connected with the preceding) it may mean that every Christian in this life can expect to undergo the fire of suffering and purification. As every sacrifice had to be salted to be acceptable to God (Lev 2:13), so the followers of Jesus must be purified by the fire of self-denial (vv. 43–47) to be acceptable servants. See Mal 3:2–3 for fire as God's means of purifying his servants and Php 2:17 for the apostolic ministry portrayed as sacrifice. (CSB)

Fire purified and salt preserved. Christians may be kept in the true faith through the trials they endure. (TLSB)

This verse is a Gospel promise. It explains, and denotes the way out for the condemned sinner who is conscious of his guilt. "Everyone" denotes every Christian. "Will be salted" means "will be cleansed, will be purified." "With fire" is dative of means and denotes the Word of God. Look at John 15:2-3. Note that "fire" has a radically different meaning here than in verse 48. For a parallel example compare Luke 3:16-17, where "fire" has distinctly different meanings. By the way, the difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology is evident in the explanation of verse 49. Lenski interprets "fire" as the Word and the Spirit. But Hendriksen: "A fiery trial will come upon everybody, for the purpose of purification." Obviously he says this because he does not believe that the Word is the means of grace. (Buls)

The preceding verse referred to the everlasting fire of hell. Here the fire appears to be the pain we endure as we say no to evil and die to sin. It isn't easy; it's a struggle, much like the sharp sting of salt poured into an open wound. Mal. 3:2-4 likens the Messiah's purification of His people to the refining of gold and silver, intense heat melts the metal so the dross may be removed. In this way, the Lord "seasons" (salts) His people, preserving and purifying them so they bring more honor to Him and build up others.

Schlatter feels that Jesus tells us to pick our fire; either the salty fire of self-discipline in this life, or the frightful ire that never ends. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

puri. Fire in this context is testing and purification by trial. *halisthēsetai*, “salted,” calls to mind the salting of Old Testament sacrifices to make them pure and acceptable (Lev 2:13).

9:50 *Salt is good*. The distinctive mark of discipleship typified by salt is allegiance to Jesus and the gospel. (CSB)

Have salt in yourselves.† Those thus purified (v. 49) become “the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). (CSB)

The first three words are axiomatic. Everyone will agree with this statement. Note that predicate adjective is placed for emphasis: “The salt is truly good.” And likely the article indicates a particular type of salt, the Word and the Spirit. (Buls)

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

The final sentence is a compound sentence, with compound imperatives, contrasting reflexive and reciprocal action. A connecting word “and so” in the Greek, not translated here, likely means “and thus.” Only when we have the Word and Spirit in ourselves can we have peace among ourselves. We have come full circle from verses 34 and 35. The only cure for pride, prejudice, offense and living in sin is the salt of the Word and the Spirit. This will keep us at peace with each other. Note again that verses 48-50 are found only here in Mark. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: He who tames his members with the help of the Holy Spirit, holds himself within bounds, does not give sin free reign, he keeps his faith and a good conscience, keeps his body and should to everlasting life. The Lord demands a painful offering from His disciples, the offering of their own members . . . Christians, who are sanctified and make progress in sanctification through the Word and Spirit of the Lord, must always have this salt and with God's Word and Spirit must part ways with the rotten deeds of the world, rather than to permit themselves to be lured into sin by the world, but must practice mutual peace and must not consider themselves superior to others. (Buls)

be at peace with one another. Strife is resolved and peace restored when we recognize in one another a common commitment to Jesus and the gospel. (CSB)

Faith brought peace, which was especially needed among contentious disciples. (TLSB)

The idea expressed in the previous verse continues here with the necessity of maintaining one's “saltiness” through repentance and self-discipline; otherwise, the Christian becomes useless, like salt that has lost its flavor. The trials we endure prompt us to be more accepting and encouraging of our imperfect fellow believers, resulting in “peace with each other” – the solution for John's critical attitude toward the man casting out demons in verse 38. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

halas, “salt.” Salt was collected from pits, marshes, and basins where salt water evaporated. This salt was mixed with impurities, especially if it was from the Dead Sea. Symbolic meanings for salt include wisdom, generosity, and wit (Col 4:6); purification and exorcism (Ezek 16:4; Mt 5:13; 2 Ki 2:20–22); salary or currency (Ezek 4:14); covenant (Num 18:19; 2 Chr 15:5); curse and judgment (Judg 9:45).

9:42–50 Nothing is more important than retaining the faith unto eternal life. Let nothing come between you and the Savior. Though He tests us with fire, He does not consume His own people. Rejoice, for God graciously gives us the faith in which He preserves us to eternity. • Lord, give us the lasting faith that can persevere through every trial. Empty our hands of anything that competes with You, and let us hold firmly to You eternally. Amen. (TLSB)