

Notes for Next Sunday

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Israel might have asked: Did the Lord choose us because we were bigger or greater than other nations? The Lord's choice wasn't grounded in any quality found in Israel; it arose instead from a quality found in God. The old poem, "How odd of God to choose the Jews," underscores how unexpected and unmerited that choice was. That's what we call grace, God's remarkable mercy and faithfulness toward sinners who don't deserve either one. (PBC)

C. S. Lewis once observed that there's something unscrupulous about the grace of God; He doesn't choose men and women to be His because of what He hopes to obtain from them. There's a little voice inside each of us that wants to boast about the Lord's choice. Jesus, however, told His disciples, "You did not choose me but I chose you" (John 15:16), and St Paul added: "[God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:4-5). (PBC)

Epistle (Romans 8:28-39). This reading is one of tremendous assurance to Christians. It first of all comforts them that they are no accident of history; therefore there are no "accidents" in our history anymore. He was in charge, and He is in charge; all the "accidents" of history are His working for our good (vv. 28-30). The Roman Christians were suffering great persecution. While we don't suffer their kind of torment, the world in which we Christians live is filled with constant vexation. In verses 31-39 are assurance, hope, and comfort from the grace of God revealed through Jesus Christ is nowhere stated with greater confidence and exuberance than in this passage. These verses promise us that we will not only survive but thrive by being saved for heaven.

Gospel (Matthew 13:44-52). Jesus told these last four parables, found only in Matthew, to His disciples. Verses 44-46 contain the first two parables. The reign of God is about what God is doing in Jesus. The reign parables, especially when they involve a sole figure who acts, reveals something about what Jesus Himself is doing in His eschatological ministry of deeds and words. (CC) In verses 47-50 the parable of the net teaches the same general lesson as the parable of the weeds: There will be a final separation of the righteous and the wicked. The parable of the weeds also emphasizes that we are not to try to make such a separation now and that this is entirely the Lord's business (vv. 28–30, 41–42). (CSB) With the parable in verse 52, Jesus encourages His disciples to imitate the master of a house who brings out food for his family and guests. Jesus had trained His disciples to be teachers for the kingdom of heaven. In their teaching, they were to bring out both old and new. Without giving up the OT, they were to add the NT.

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 7:9

⁶For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. ⁷The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

7:6 *holy*. Separated from all corrupting people or things and consecrated totally to the Lord. (CSB)

7:6 *chosen ... His treasured possession*. God formed the nation of Israel for Himself, so they might proclaim His praise (Is 43:21) and lead other people to the Lord. (TLSB)

7:7 *treasured possession*. See note on Ex 19:5 – The equivalent phrases used of Christians in 1Pe 2:9 are “chosen people” and “people belonging to God.” (CSB)

7:8 *because the LORD loved you.*† The “covenant of love” (vv. 9, 12) stems from God’s love for his people, as expressed in his covenant; it does not stem from the numerical greatness of the people or any virtue of theirs. His love must be reciprocated by his people. Love for God and neighbor (see Lev 19:18) is built on the love that the Lord has for his people (1Jn 4:19–21) and on his identification with them. Such love is to be total, involving one’s whole being.). (CSB)

7:9 *thousand generations of those who love him*. There are no time limits on God’s abundant mercy for those who love Him (Ex 34:7). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 8:28-39

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. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

8:28 *for those who love God*. Emphasized in Gk. Not people in general, but believers, who are loved by God first. (TLSB)

8:28 *according to His purpose*. God planned our salvation in advance. The Spirit, in history, has called us by the Gospel (cf 1:7, 16–17). (TLSB)

8:29 *foreknew*.† Knowledge here is not abstract but is couched in love and mixed with purpose. God not only knew us before we had any knowledge of him, but he also knew us in the sense of choosing us by his grace, before the foundation of the world. (CSB)

8:29 *predestined*. God in grace alone made a decision beforehand (Eph 1:5, 11). (TLSB)

8:34 *interceding for us*. From Christ’s heavenly office “as the Mediator, Atoning Sacrifice, High Priest, and Intercessor” before God, “He has promised that He will hear our prayer” and that this is “the worship

He approves above all other worship, that He be called upon in all afflictions” (AC XXI 2–3; cf 1Jn 2:1). (TLSB)

8:35 who will separate us from the love of Christ. Rhetorical questions with mounting intensity. The same answer follows—“nothing and no one!” (TLSB)

8:38 angels ... rulers ... powers. Unseen cosmic forces. Though created by God, they now stand in opposition to God’s eternal purpose because of the fall (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16). They threaten to separate us from Christ’s love, but Christ has triumphed over them (Eph 1:20–23; Col 2:15). (TLSB)

8:39 neither height nor depth. It is impossible to get beyond God’s loving reach. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 13:44-52

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

13:44 treasure hidden in a field. In ancient times it was common to hide treasure in the ground since there were no banks—though there were “bankers” (Mt 25:27). (CSB)

13:44 hid it again. This does not mean that it was meaningless to him but that he prized it very highly.

13:44 in His joy He went. This is used 59 times in the NT. Except for its use in an axiom (Jn 15:21) it is never used of unregenerate man. It is used often of the joy of faith, especially in trying circumstances and deep sorrow.

13:46 sold everything...bought it. Just as the two men in these parable sold everything they had in order to purchase what they found, so the kingdom of God must be bought for all of us. But the price is much more than we could possibly pay. The whole world would not be payment enough for a single soul. The filthy rags of our own personal righteousness could not even begin to make a down payment. The only possible solution was for someone else to pay the price for us, and the only one who could do that was God’s holy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The price he paid was his own holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. Now he offers us all the blessings of his kingdom for time and eternity as gifts of his grace. He bought and paid for these blessings in full, not for himself but for us. And we do not lose these treasures when we share them. The more we give them away, the more richly we possess them ourselves. (PBC)

⁴⁷“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹

“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied.

⁵²

He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

13:47 like a net. A dragnet was drawn through the water between two boats and onto the shore. When the net was full, edible and inedible fish were sorted from one another. (TLSB)