

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Amos 5:6-7, 10—15). The eighth century BC was a time of great danger for Israel and Judah because they had forsaken the Lord their God. The Assyrians were growing in power and military might and were threatening both the North and the South. Corruption and idolatry were rampant in the land, and as a result, the Northern Kingdom of Israel (here called “Joseph” for the forefather of the kingdom’s prominent tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh) was called to repentance. Prophets were sent by God to speak to his people, but their message was not heard and believed. Ultimately, both kingdoms would fall—the North to Assyria in 721 BC and the South to Babylon, who destroyed the Lord’s temple in 587 BC.

Epistle (Hebrews 3:12-19). God’s people missed rest in the Promised Land through their unbelief. This is a warning to us. God calls us to trust Him and to enter into the rest that He has enjoyed since the completion of creation. In Christ Jesus, we have rest from the accusation of the Law. The Holy Spirit leads us to trust in Christ, granting us everlasting peace.

Gospel (Mark 10:17-22). Jesus teaches His disciples that not even people with the greatest worldly means (e.g., a rich man) can enter the kingdom of God on their own merit. We cannot justify ourselves; we receive salvation (“inherit eternal life”) solely by grace through faith in Jesus, just like a little child (10:13–16).

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

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

⁶Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. ⁷You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground. ¹⁰you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth. ¹¹You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. ¹²For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. ¹³Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. ¹⁴Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. ¹⁵Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

5:6 devour. Nothing will be able to extinguish the fiery judgment coming upon Israel, for it comes from the Lord Himself. (TLSB)

5:7 wormwood. Bitter plant with a repulsive taste. Accordingly, it represents sorrow. Once again, Amos rails against the prevalent injustice of his day, especially the abuse of the poor. (TLSB)

5:10 abhor him who speaks the truth. Dishonest oppressors naturally loathed those who dared contradict or expose them. Luther: “Wickedness cannot bear sound doctrine” (AE 18:161). (TLSB)

5:11 taxes of grain. Taxes were one way the poor were exploited rather than protected. (TLSB)

5:11 houses of hewn stone. Expensive homes, associated with royal households. However, Israel will not enjoy the fruit of these ill-gotten gains. (TLSB)

5:12 needy in the gate. The poor bring lawsuits in order to protect their rights and so secure justice. Notice how vv 10–12 begin and end with references to legal proceedings at the city gate. (TLSB)

5:13 It is an evil time. Unbridled wickedness forced the wise into resigned silence. Pressing for justice seemed futile and even dangerous. (TLSB)

5:15 remnant. These words look beyond the impending destruction of the Northern Kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians and see that a faithful few will be preserved and restored, leaving a mere remnant. Amos’s last oracle similarly speaks of God restoring the faithful remnant (9:11–15). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 3:12-19

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. ¹⁵ As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” ¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

3:12 that none of you ... turns away from the living God. To turn away rebelliously (lit. “to become apostate”) from God is to turn away from life and to choose death, just as did some of the Israelites who came out of Egypt. (CSB)

3:12 deceitfulness of sin.— This is the refusal to trust God and is coupled with a refusal to accept what is true. An unbelieving heart will willingly accept deception. (TLSB)

3:14 hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. That God, in Christ Jesus, forgives sin. This phrase may be the call to holiness and the hope of future glory given in Baptism. (TLSB)

3:16-18 God’s people formerly missed out on what He had promised through their acts of unbelief. The writer highlights the fact that those who have experienced God’s goodness should persevere in faith. God will punish those who sin and they will lose their rest and inheritance. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 10:17-22

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

10:17 a man. Mark does not identify the man, but Luke (18:18) calls him a “ruler,” meaning he was probably a member of an official council or court, and Matthew (19:20) says he was “young.” (CSB)

10:17 what must I do ... ? The rich man was thinking in terms of earning righteousness to merit eternal life, but Jesus taught that it was a gift to be received (see v. 15). (CSB)

10:18 Why do you call me good? Jesus was not denying his own goodness but was forcing the man to recognize that his only hope was in total reliance on God, who alone can give eternal life. He may also have been encouraging the young man to consider the full identity and nature of the One he was addressing. (CSB)

10:20 all these I have kept. The man spoke sincerely, because for him keeping the law was a matter of external conformity. That the law also required inner obedience, which no one can fully satisfy, apparently escaped him completely. Paul speaks of having had a similar outlook before his conversion (Php 3:6). (CSB)

10:21 Jesus ... loved him. Jesus recognized the man's earnestness. His response was not intended to shame him by exposing failure to understand the spiritual depth of the commandments but was an expression of genuine love. (CSB)

10:21 One thing you lack ... Go, sell everything. The young man's primary problem was his wealth (see v. 22), and therefore Jesus' prescription was to rid him of it. There is no indication that Jesus' command to him was meant for all Christians. It applies only to those who have the same spiritual problem. (CSB)

10:22 He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Note the utter contrast between 17 and 22. This young Pharisee did not tempt Jesus but energetically sought Him. But when he heard Jesus' demand, a demand for all of us, he was crushed. (Buls)