

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 50:4-10

4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. **5** The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. **6** I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. **7** But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. **8** He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. **9** Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. **10** Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

50:4–5, 7, 9 *Lord God*. The only uses of this title in the servant songs. (CSB)

50:4 *Me*. The Servant, identified by title in 42:1; 49:6. (TLSB)

The Servant is given a learned “tongue” and a listening “ear” characteristic of “those being taught/disciples.” The Servant is the disciple par excellence because he always listens to God (Deut. 6:4), and this gives him the ability to speak a Word that sustains the weary. (CC)

John 5:19, “Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 8:28 “Jesus therefore said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.’”

In 40:28-31, Yahweh had promised to renew the strength of the weary. The tired Israelites are a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand, the majority lament that their way is hidden from Yahweh and that he has neglected their “justice/cause” (40:27). These people share a commonality with pagan idolaters (44:12) and are therefore exhorted to awaken from their lengthy lethargy (51:17; 52:1). They have fainted and lie at the head of every street (51:20). On the other hand, some are “pursuing righteousness” and “seeking Yahweh” (51:1), who claims them all as “my people” and “my nation” (51:4; cf. 40:1). Yet these believers are sinful, desperate, and exhausted. (CC)

Jesus invites all who are weary to come to him for rest (Mt.11:28). Every lackluster believer may listen confidently for his encouraging Word. Ears are on the outside of our heads and not on the inside. This physical makeup encourages us to listen to God and not to ourselves. And our God speaks! The OT refers to the Word of God coming to his peoples at least 394 times. (CC)

His voice becomes even more pronounced in Jesus. “No one ever spoke like this man” (Jn. 7:46). “He was teaching as one who has authority and not as their scribes” (Mt. 7:29). Jesus is able, like no other, to bolster and brace the weary. One of the most galvanizing promises Christ made is that the enemy, whose accusations continually exhaust us, will go down in defeat. Our chief adversary, Satan, will be consumed in the same way that a moth eats a garment (51:9; 51:8). “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Christ’s word does not condemn weary exiles; it save them (cf. 3:17). The Servant’s surrender to God’s plan, leading to death, becomes the source of our needed justification (Is. 53:11; 54:17). (CC)

Like a teacher awakening his student, Yahweh opens the ear of the Servant (cf. 22:14). This contrasts with Israel's inability to open its ears and listen (48:8) The root problem is idolatry. Fascination with counterfeit gods cuts off all communication between Yahweh and his people (6:9-10). In the Servant, though, Israel can be reconciled to Yahweh (53:11; cf. Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:22). Those who listen to the Servant's voice are led out of darkness and begin to walk in the light (Is. 50:10; Jn. 8:12). (CC)

INSTRUCTED TONGUE – limood – A tongue that has been taught. The KJV says “the tongue of the learned.” Sometimes it is also called a disciples tongue. That would imply ongoing learning and following of Christ. It is one that is well educated and therefore can speak with authority. This was especially true when it came to God's Word.

The Servant is the most excellent disciple because He listens before He speaks. “To listen” is to epitomize Israel's response to the Lord (cf Dt 6:4). (TLSB)

The Servant is the most excellent disciple because He listens before He speaks. (TLSB)

The Hebrew describes it as the “tongue of learners,” i.e. a tongue adapted to deliver effectively the message that is given Him to communicate. (Leupold)

Trained tongue, a well-taught tongue. Christ did nothing of Himself; only as the Father had taught Him, so He spoke (John 8:28). (PC)

The power of the Word parted the Red Sea because the Lord said, “Strike it!” (cf. Ex. 14:16). By this Word the sea was divided, and He commanded them to cross over. Here dullness and weakness depart from them. So weakness departs from the Word; then the water of Baptism and the bread and wine become exceedingly powerful, for beyond the water and the bread and wine there is the Word of Christ, who accomplishes more than does the weakness of the appearance, the minister, and the element. This is so because the Lord God has added a tongue that is taught, because it is a tongue instructed by the Lord. The Lord is the teacher; He teaches the tongue in such a way that it speaks nothing but what is divinely inspired. He says elsewhere, The Lord “made My mouth like a sharp sword ... He made Me a polished arrow” (Is. 49:2). This is a Hebraism. Christ has the power of administration, He has the scepter, so that those who have accepted the Word would not immediately be offended. This Word is not humanly transmitted but divinely, and therefore its divine power comes to the aid of the fettered, those enduring trials, and all the weary and exhausted, since these lack resources and wisdom and are the off scouring before the world. The Lord truly says, “In due time I know that I will speak with those people so that they might have strength in weakness.” However, He does not want to set us free at once, as we have prescribed time, place, and manner for Him. What He wills to do will be enough, if only we trust in Him. (Luther)

Exodus 4:12 “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

John 7:46 “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared.”

are taught – The prophets received communication from God, often in their sleep. This afforded them great insight as what God wanted them to do.

Psalms 71:17 “Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

Jeremiah 32:33 “They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline.”

John 6:45 “It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’

Ephesians 4:21 “Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”

word of him who weary. † In 42:3 the servant assisted the weak. Cf. Jer 31:25. (CSB)

yawafe – Those who are exhausted, faint or fatigued.(QV)

Jesus’ words have the power to convert “weary” souls. His very words are sheer “spirit and life.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

The Servant’s mission has to do both with Israel and the Gentiles. Israelites were laboring under the burden of the law and finding no peace, and the Gentiles laboring under the oppressive burden of idol-religions that afforded no peace to the burdened conscience of the sinner. (Leupold)

Isaiah 42:3 “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

Jeremiah 31:25 “I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.”

Matthew 11:28-29 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

morning by morning he awakens – oor – To help rise up or to stir. It is like being awakened so one can be instructed or learn the next lesson.

awakens my ear. Unlike Israel (see v. 2), the servant was responsive to God. (CSB)

While rebellious Israel turned a deaf ear to God, the Servant would “speak just as the Father taught” Him (Jn 8:27–29). Therefore, a word from Him sufficed to sustain the weary. (TLSB)

To make it ready for instruction. A little bit like toning a piano so that great music make come from it.

Unlike Israel, which often was deaf to God’s Word, the Messiah would eagerly listen. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

God is described as supplying every day, as a necessary gift, an alert ear, keeping it sensitive to the divine teaching. As true man He remained a “learner” all His days. (Leupold)

Not enlightening Him occasionally, as He did the prophets, by dreams and visions, but continually whispering in his ear. At n time did the Father “leave Him alone” (John 8:29) or cease to speak to Him. “morning by morning” is not to be narrowed to the bare literal meaning, but to be taken in the sense of “uninterruptedly) (PC)

those who are taught – The student is paying attention.

Like a pupil who is ready to learn. But when they hear us for the purpose of passing judgment on the Word, they are bringing the ears of a teacher. One who is eager for the truth submits his ears to learning, and he does not fight to show off his skill. To one who makes this kind of accusation you must answer: “I am not here to teach the teacher but the pupil who is eager and wearied, who reduces his wisdom to nothing.” Here is a most harmonious relationship between the learned tongue, the ready ear, and the heart prepared for learning. (Luther)

To have the proper spiritual understanding of the Lord’s will and to yield a glad obedience to it. Cp. Ps. 40, 6-8; Heb. 10, 5-7. (Kretzmann)

50:5 Because the Servant is listening, it follows that He cannot be rebellious. This description sets Him apart from all other servants, prophets, or leaders of Israel, as everyone else had times in which they turned their back on the Lord (e.g., Ex 4:13; Jer 20:9, 14; Jnh 1:3). Only one Servant could truly claim such obedience to the Lord (cf Jn 8:29). (TLSB)

opened my ear. A sign of obedience. (CSB)

Unlike the rebellious nation of Israel (e.g., 48:4; 8), whose ears are closed (e.g., 42:20), the Servant’s ear are wide open. As Israel’s substitute Servant, he reverses the nation’s deafness (6:10; 42:19). The Servant will never turn back (50:5). He is treated shamefully (50:6), but in the end, he will not be put to shame (50:7). Idolatrous Israel, on the other hand, is turned back in utter shame (42:17). There is a sharp contrast between Israel and the submissive Servant. His life testifies against those who doubt Yahweh’s Word and turn to other gods. (CC)

pawthakh – To loosen, unstop or open wide. This was a sign of obedience which was different than what Israel had been. (QV)

To listen with cheerful willingness. (Kretzmann)

His ear was opened to receive God’s Word perpetually. (PC)

Because the Servant is listening, it follows that He cannot be rebellious. The description sets Him apart from all other servants, prophets, or leaders of Israel, as everyone else had times in which they turned their back on the Lord (e.g. Ex.4:1-13; Jer. 20:9, 14; Jonah 1:3). Only one Servant could truly claim such obedience to the Lord (cf. John 8:29). (TLSB)

This willing, cooperative attitude on the part of the Servant is a restatement of what was also said in 4b. The Servant eagerly desires to be directed by the Lord in all His ways. Jesus obediently fulfilled this predicted attitude of the Servant as told by Paul. (Phil. 2:5-8) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Psalm 40:6-8 “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced · burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll.⁸ I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

Matthew 13:23 “But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

John 14:31 “but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”

Acts 2:41 “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 17:11 “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Philippians 2:5-8 “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

was not rebellious. Unlike Israel. (CSB)

The Servant is not only different from “servant” Israel, but he is also unlike all other OT servants, prophets, or leaders. Moses wanted someone else to rescue Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 4:13). Gideon complains, “My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father’s house (Judges 6:15). Jonah tried to run away (Jonah 1:3) and would rather die than to submit to his God (Jonah 4:3, 8). Jeremiah admits to being rebellious (Jer. 20:9, 14). Only one Servant can truly claim complete obedience to Yahweh (Jn. 8:29). He does not need forgiveness, since he has no sin (Is. 53:9; Heb. 4:15). Instead, he forgives sinners by offering himself as the “guilt offering” (Is. 53:10). By his agony and disgrace, he makes intercession for transgressors (53:12). (CC)

Not even when His soul was sorrowful even unto death and His human nature was trembling with the severity of the afflictions which He suffered. Cp. Ps. 22, 12-21; 1 Pet. 2, 22. (Kretzmann)

“It is the Lord who opens My ears.” So it is for Christ and so it is for all Christians, even if because of weakness and denseness they feel that all things are contradictions and hindrances and faults in sins, anxiety, poverty, blasphemy, etc. Nevertheless, to hear the Word in earnest and to bear all things for the sake of the Word, this is ultimately very difficult. (Luther)

Matthew 26:39 “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Romans 5:19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

Hebrews 5:8 “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered”

I truned not backward – The Servant knows that there will be problems but keeps going just the same.

“I do not turn back to Egypt and become unbelieving, but I confess the Word with the mouth as well as in deed. I sing the praises of the power and might of that seemingly powerless and foolish Word.” (Luther)

Deuteronomy 5:32 “So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.”

Joshua 1:7-8 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

Proverbs 4:27 “Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

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

50:6 Listening (50:4) and obedience (50:5) play a part in learning, but the most important teacher for a theologian of the cross is suffering. Knowledge is not merely antiseptic acquaintance with ideas, but rich development of thought in the crucible of life. Luther writes:

For as soon as God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his insults will teach you to seek and love God’s Word. I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil’s raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise. And I heartily grant them what they have won in return for making this of me, honor, victory, and triumph, for that’s the way they wanted it. AE 34:287 (CC)

There is an escalation of humiliation in this verse. First the Servant’s back is beaten. Then his beard is pulled out. This was to show contempt and disrespect to the person (2 Sam. 10:4-5; Neh. 13:25). (Young writes: “The Oriental regarded the beard as a sign of freedom and respect, and to pluck out the hair of the beard is to show utter contempt.) Finally, he does not hide his face from mocking and spit. This suggests a quasi-legal setting in which the Servant is publicly shamed. (CC)

Unlike the predominance of passive verbs in the Fourth Servant Song (52:13-53:12), in this verse, the Servant is in control of the situation. He gives his back and his cheeks. He does not hide from scorn or spit. (CC)

In his passion, Jesus takes both an active and a passive role in suffering (often called his active and his passive obedience, respectively). Actively, he says, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (Jn. 10:17-18 ESV). Passively, the Savior accepts violent abuse and ridicule. “Then they spit in his face and beat him. And some slapped him” (Mt. 26:67; see also 1 Peter 2:23). (CC)

my back to those who strike. Beatings were for criminals or fools (see Pr 10:13; 19:29; 26:3; Mt 27:26; Jn 19:1). (CSB)

The Servant is abused by others as Jesus was in His Passion. (TLSB)

This offers a first look at the suffering the Servant must undergo. The eternal Word of life that the Servant brings to His people will come at a great cost to Him. It will cause Him great suffering and anguish. Describing Christ in this role, Luther said “Christ is the first to undergo a host of afflictions because of the Word” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

This implied that a whipping would take place. Beatings happened to criminals. This and what follows is the “way of the cross.” Jesus freely takes that path. (Luther)

Isaiah 53:5 “but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Matthew 27:26 “Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”

pull out my beard. A sign of disrespect and contempt (see 2Sa 10:4–5; Ne 13:25). (CSB)

This detail of Jesus’ appearance, commonly depicted by artists, occurs only here. Pulling out of a beard showed contempt and disrespect for the person (cf 2Sm 10:4–5; Ne 13:25). (TLSB)

Beards symbolized dignity, maturity and manhood.

2 Samuel 10:4-5 “So Hanun seized David’s men, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away. ⁵When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, “Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back.”

Nehemiah 13:25 “I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves.”

Isaiah 7:20 “Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”

disgrace and spitting. To show hatred (Job 30:10) or to insult or disgrace (Dt 25:9; Job 17:6; Mt 27:30). This treatment of the servant anticipates his ultimate suffering in 52:13–53:12. (CSB)

This was to show hatred, insult or disgrace. Moses had a severe punishment for this.

What does that spitting accomplish except extolling the wisdom of the world? Thus our face toward the world, if anyone will look at it with spiritual eyes, is so spit upon, so polluted by endless disgraces, that no profession is less imposing in the world than that of those who profess the Gospel. But for one disgrace a hundred glorious rays will one day appear, because the Lord Himself is present as our Helper. He strengthens, preserves, and liberates the hearers. (Luther)

Deuteronomy 25:9 “his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.”

Job 17:6 “God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.

Job 30:10 “They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.

Matthew 27:30 “They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.”

50:7 Lord God – adonoy - Lord and master, someone who controls. (QV)

For the third time (50:4-5), the Servant states that the Lord Yahweh assists him in his mission. (CC)

All-powerful Jehovah, the God of the covenant, to whom He has appealed time and again. (Kretzmann)

helps me. In the past He has not been disappointed when He fell back upon the Lord. (Leupold)

not been disgraced ... put to shame. See 29:22 and note. Ultimately the servant will be honored (see 49:7; 52:13; 53:10–12). (CSB)

Disgraced is awlawn – and means to wound or insult. Shame is boosh and means to be disappointed or confounded. Knowing that the all-powerful God will never leave him, he can totally focus his activities and energy on his calling.

The power of God will uphold Him while under the horrible treatment that is to come. If He were a mere man, and on His own, He could not undergo all that is in store. But with the Sovereign Lord’s help, the Servant will not be disgraced or defeated in His stated goal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Even death is not a disgrace for the Servant, who places His life in the Lord’s hands. (TLSB)

The assistance given to His soul by the strength of Jehovah keeping Him from being submerged in misery and shame. (Kretzmann)

Psalm 119:6 “then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

Romans 9:33 “As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

Philippians 1:20 “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

1 Peter 4:16 “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

1 John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”

my face like flint. Like the prophets, the servant will endure with great determination. Cf. Lk 9:51, where Jesus “resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (lit. “resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem”). (CSB)

Jesus “set His face” when he resolutely set out for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). See Jesus’ determination to fulfill everything written by the prophets (Lk 18:31; 24:44). (TLSB)

Confident that he will receive help and vindication, in the face of opposition, he sets his face like flint. In the call narratives of other prophets, Yahweh made Jeremiah to be like an iron pillar (among other

metaphors in Jer. 1:18), and he made Ezekiel's face hard with a forehead like emery (Ezekiel 3:8-9) so that they could withstand the attacks on their ministries from the very people to whom they were called to serve. (CC)

Being sure of not being disgraced or put to shame one can move ahead confidently. Jesus did so and with great determination. By this Jesus is saying "Thy will be done."

A Christian might be thus influenced that he has a very hard face, since he will have to hear insults and even see openly that everything, however good, right, and true it may be, is given the worst possible interpretation. Let not then Christians despair when they hear such great blasphemies from the fanatics as even human nature cannot bear, unless the Word and the Spirit of God harden our face against the despisers of the Word. (Luther)

Ezekiel 3:9 "I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house."

Luke 9:51 "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."

50:8 Courtroom settings in Isaiah end with the verdict that Yahweh is in control of history, not idols or Babylonian leaders (e.g., 41:1-7, 21-29; 45:20-25). Here Yahweh is not a protagonist in the court scene (as in chapter 41) but the key witness who is near in a spatial sense, metaphorically standing nearby in court, and/or in a chronological sense, about to intervene. The Servant is confident that Yahweh will preside over his case and acquit him in such a way that his opponents will be unable to condemn him. Paul asks the same question as the Servant: "Who is it who condemns me?" (Rom. 8:33-34). The adversary does not stand a chance. The Vindicator" publicly justifies the Servant on Easter, and he, in turn justifies many (53:11). (CC)

vindicates me. The Lord will find him righteous (see 45:25; for its ultimate fulfillment see 1Ti 3:16). (CSB)

tsawdak – To make right, clear or clean. The nearness is a great confidence builder. He is always near to us too. There is a phrase that says he is "only a prayer away."

This steadfastness is based on nothing other than the nearness of His Vindicator, not on any capacity of His own to absorb punishment. (Leupold)

Isaiah 45:25 "but in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult."

1 Timothy 3:16 "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

contend with me. Because Christ was sinless, he also nullifies the charges brought against any who believe in him (see Ro 8:31-34). (CSB)

After He had finally accomplished the Father's plan, there were no accusers left. As often happened, the false accusations fell apart when tested against the truth of the eternal Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

The Hebrew is “Lord of judgment.” The expression means not merely one who has a lawsuit or a cause, but one who is “lord of the judgment,” i.e., possessor of the cause, or one who has a claim and can demand that the judgment should be in his favor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

The guilt of all mankind was indeed imputed to Him, but in His own person He was ever the Holy One of God, whom no man could convict of sin. (Kretzmann)

“No one will dare to go into judgment with Me,” says Christ, for “God is for us, who is against us?” (Rom. 8:31). He brings it about that we consider it of no consequence, even though the whole world contends against us. The rule of the church is not located in pomp and appearance but in the Word, even in the spoken Word, on which we may stand firm against all insults. For “if God is for us, who is against us?” (Luther)

Come, let us be judged. There is nothing evil in the whole world which they themselves commit and do not shove off on us, so as to have a cause against us because of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we can innocently say with Samuel (1 Sam. 12:3): “Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken?” Yet they persecute us for the sake of their own tyrants. But we shall persevere. (Luther)

my adversary. Cf. 54:17. (CSB)

This implies the question, “Who is a master over me? It is hard to imagine that anyone would even think of doing something like that.

Let him who believes that he has a case against the Messiah step forward. (Kretzmann)

Isaiah 54:17 “no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD

Romans 8:31-34 “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.”

50:9 *who will declare me guilty* – Charged with the sins of the world, yet vindicated and acquitted when He was raised from the dead, He is at the right hand of God, defending the innocence credited to all who appeal to Him for justification (Romans 8:31-34). (TLSB)

Using the same words as in 50:7, the Servant reiterates his confidence that “the Lord Yahweh will help me.” This time, though, he adds the emphatic “behold.” Because he is vindicated (50:8), no one will be able to condemn him. (CC)

Charged with the sins of the world, yet vindicated and acquitted when He was raised from the dead, He “is at the right hand of God,” defending the innocence credited to all who appeal to Him for justification (Rm 8:31–34) (TLSB)

wear out like a garment; the moths. Those who falsely accuse the righteous succumb to moths in 51:8 (i.e., they will be destroyed). (CSB)

The Servant's enemies will be as fragile and vulnerable as cloth, which even a tiny moth can destroy. (TLSB)

Those who disregard Yahweh's acquittal of his Servant will decay, just as clothing wears out and is devoured by a moth (cf. Hos. 5:12; Job 4:19; Heb. 1:11-12). Employing a different metaphor to state the same truth, Jesus asks, "have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" (Mt. 21:42 ESV, quoting Ps. 118:22-23). He then warns, "And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him" (Mt. 21:44 ESV; cf. Is. 8:14; 28:16; Dan. 2:34). Building a life while ignoring the Cornerstone invites ruin. (CC)

That is, they will perish little by little through constant use rather than all of a sudden, but room will be given them for repentance. In another place we read: "My face is indeed weakened like a garment chewed up by worms." Thus also our enemies will perish but "the word of our God will stand forever" (Is. 40:8). (Luther)

Job 4:19 "how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!

Job 13:28 "So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths.

Job 27:18 "The house he builds is like a moth's cocoon, like a hut made by a watchman.

Isaiah 51:8 "For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations."

Hosea 5:12 "I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah."

Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."

Charges may be hurled at Him. They fall to the ground, repelled by the shield of divine protection. (Eph 6:16 – shield of faith). In fact, in the end not He but they will wear out and come to ruin, as the expressive figure indicates. A rare measure of confidence and steadfastness are displayed here, a steadfastness not based on inflated opinions of self but upon a divinely wrought certainty necessary for the fulfillment of the task assigned by the Servant's Lord. It must be admitted that the Servant depicted is a very striking figure whose potential is met fully only in Jesus Christ. (Leupold)

50:10 *fears the LORD.* yawray - In this case it means to be in awe and reverence of God for his faithfulness.(QV)

Pieper indicates that "the fear of God is basically always fear in the presence of God, awe before the majesty of God." To the unrepentant sinner, this is a horrible experience. But to the child of God, who "obeys the word of his Servant" there is only joy at being in His presence. Here the Servant is addressing those who are His own children. The enemies of the Servant are gone. They have been put to shame and are no longer in His presence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

If anyone delights in hearing the Word, if it is not a light for him, let him trust in the name of the Lord, even if he is polluted by spitting and every form of disgrace is inflicted on him, let him not be afraid, because Christ has been set forth before us in a twofold manner, as Gift and as Example. Let us then

follow His example, for under a thorn crowned head the members cannot be spoiled with indulgence. Darkness, clouds, trials, irritations on the part of demons and of men will come our way, but in spite of everything Christ is the Light; He will not leave us in darkness. (Luther)

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Isaiah 59:19 “From the west, men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along.”

His servant? Note how the Servant and the Lord are set parallel to each other. Fear and obedience are due to both. (TLSB)

in darkness. Perhaps trouble or distress, similar to the experience of the servant (cf. 8:22). (CSB)

trust ... rely. The Lord encouraged such trust in 12:2; 31:1. (CSB)

bawtakh – To put full confidence and hope in and be certain of that trust.

We cannot defend ourselves with human resources, since there is so much malice and impudence on the part of ungodly men. But let us flee for refuge to the strongest tower, the name of the Lord (cf. Prov. 18:10), and there every righteous man will be made to rejoice, and even the dead will be made alive. (Luther)

Psalm 37:5 “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.”

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Isaiah 12:2 “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”

Isaiah 26:4 “Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

Isaiah 31:1 “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.”

Ch 50 The Lord contrasts His Servant’s humility and obedience with Israel’s rebelliousness. The Servant’s obedience and suffering atoned for your sins and the sins of all the world. Walk in the light of His Word. In Him there is no disgrace. • Awaken my ear, O Jesus. Rouse me each day to fear, love, and trust my Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also:

though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

:1 teachers. Office in the Early Church. Its work, along with that of apostles and prophets, was eventually carried out by pastors (cf Ac 13:1; 1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11). Nevertheless, these warnings apply to all who claim to teach (cf Lk 11:45–46, 52). (TLSB)

judged with greater strictness. Because a teacher has great influence, he will be held more accountable (see Lk 20:47; cf. Mt 23:1–33). (CSB)

Because false teaching can destroy the faith of those being taught (cf Gal 1:8–9). Both a stricter standard of judgment and a harsher punishment. (TLSB)

God holds those who work daily in the Word to higher standards. “To whom much has been given, from him shall much be expected. (PBC)

Right views of the responsibility of religious teachers and guides, of the difficulties of their work, the strict account which they must render to God, and the awful ruin which will come on those who are unfaithful, tend effectually to prevent improper aspirations for power in the church. (Concordia Bible)

It seems that in many of the congregations, which were composed largely of Jewish Christians, the custom of permitting almost any man to speak that so desired had been taken over. This was a dangerous practice in more than one respect, and therefore the apostle writes: Become not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we (as such) shall receive the more severe condemnation. In the Jewish synagogues, especially in the Dispersion, in the cities outside of Palestine, there was little restriction in the matter of teachers; almost any one would be listened to that desired to be heard. But whereas all believers are kings and priests before God and the Lord Jesus, they are not all teachers of the congregation, they may not all arrogate to themselves the office of preacher. But there was not only danger under such circumstances that the Gospel-message would not receive its proper attention, but the speakers were also inclined to let personal matters sway them, the result being that the discourses in the common assemblies were anything but edifying at times. It was necessary, therefore, to remind the unauthorized teachers of the fact that the responsibility resting upon the office and the account which the teachers must give on the last day, Heb. 13, 17, would make the sentence passed upon them all the more severe. (Kretzmann)

3:2-3 teleios anēr, “complete man.” The one who does not stumble (*ou paiei*) with his words is the perfect man and has control also of the things he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

3:2 we all stumble – We all offend in many things; of course in the office of teaching also, where there is especial danger of our offending in word. This ought to deter us from forwardness in arrogating to ourselves this work. (Concordia Bible)

None can avoid sin. (TLSB)

what he says. Reintroduces the issue of speech (1:19, 26). Because teachers speak often and authoritatively, they have greater opportunity and temptation to speak wrongly for their own benefit. (TLSB)

perfect man. Since the tongue is so difficult to control, anyone who controls it perfectly gains control of himself in all other areas of life as well. (CSB)

Luther: “Those who are truly righteous not only sigh and plead for the grace of God because they see that they have an evil inclination and thus are sinful before God, but also because they see that they can never understand fully how deep is the evil of their will and how far it extends, they believe that they are always sinners, as if the depth of their evil will were infinite” (AE 25:221). (TLSB)

The apostle now gives reasons for the sternness of his rebuke: For manifoldly we offend, all of us. If a man does not offend in word, that man is a perfect man, able to keep under the restraint of the bridle also the whole body. The general course of life may well be called a way and each individual action a step; therefore any offense or lapse or transgression may well be termed a stumble. All men without exception become guilty of such stumbling, even the best of Christians are subject to sins of weakness. And now James, in applying this general truth to the case in hand, states that a man who can control his speech at all times, never offending by so much as a single word, may well be considered a perfect man, since the ability to control the tongue argues at least for the probability of controlling the entire body and keeping all the members from sinning. If a man is able to perform the more difficult task, he will have little trouble with that which is comparatively easy. (Kretzmann)

3:3 As a bit directs a horse or a rudder steers a ship, so the tongue can affect the entire person and others as well. (TLSB)

That little piece of steel in a horse’s mouth, when managed properly, can control a two thousand-pound animal. (PBC)

But the difficulty of controlling the tongue is now shown by two examples. The apostle writes, in the first place: But if we put bits into the mouths of the horses to make them obey us, and we direct their entire bodies. This was an example with which his readers were familiar, which they understood. Horses are driven and kept in control by means of the bits placed into their mouths, the driver merely pulling the reins in order to have the horses’ head in any direction that he chooses. (Kretzmann)

3:4 *a very small rudder* – That little shaped plank, mostly invisible beneath the waterline, enables a captain to control the course of an immense ship filled with cargo, crew, and passengers. (PBC)

In another case the ease of control is still more apparent and also wonderful: Behold also the ships, although they are so great and, moreover, tossed about with fierce winds, yet are guided with a very small rudder, whithersoever the mind of the steersman wills. This fact is apparent in our days even more than in the times of small vessels. Ships of many thousands of tons displacement obey the slightest pressure of the helmsman, or slight turn of the wheel on the bridge. Even when the sea is agitated, the pilot or officer has little trouble in directing the course of the vessel as he chooses, as he thinks best, so long as the steering apparatus is in order and the rudder does not break. It is a marvel of human ingenuity to be able to keep a large vessel in control with such tiny devices as compared with its great size. (Kretzmann)

3:5-6 The tongue is characterized as a fire (*pur*) and as “unright” (*adikias*), being enflamed by the gehenna, or hell (*phlogizomenē hupo tēs geennēs*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

3:5 *a small member* – The apostle now makes the application: So also the tongue is a small member, and yet boasts of great exploits. The writer speaks of the tongue as though it had a personality of its own and made use of its power by deliberate action. As small as it is among the members of the body, yet it can boast of performing great deeds. By way of comparison the apostle again calls out: Behold how small a fire, what a forest it does kindle! or: What an immense fire, what an immense forest the tongue does kindle! It takes only a small fire, a burning match carelessly thrown aside, to start a fire which may consume many square miles of forest. (Kretzmann)

yet it boasts of great things – As everlasting consequences depend upon the use of the tongue, all, and especially ministers of the gospel, should earnestly pray that they may always so speak as shall tend most to honor God and benefit their fellow-men. (CB)

ablaze by such a small fire – Under control, a spark can make a small fire to warm cold travelers and cook their food. Out of control, a spark can cause a conflagration that can reduce thousands of acres of mighty trees to blackened, smoking stumps. (PBC)

3:6 *world of unrighteousness*. Like the world in its fallenness. (CSB)

The “world” in Jas is always opposed to God (1:27; 2:5). Words can reflect the fallen nature (cf Mk 7:14–23), which struggles against God. (TLSB)

staining the whole body – James thinks it urgent that people learn to control their mouths, not only to avoid hurting other people emotionally and spiritually. But an uncontrolled tongue can also turn on the uncontrolled talker, corrupting the whole person, poisoning his or her mind, and plunging the body into the dangers of the fires of hell. (PBC)

set on fire by hell. A figurative way of saying that the source of the tongue’s evil is the devil (see Jn 8:44). (CSB)

We are tempted by our sinful nature, by the devil, and by this sinful world. (TLSB)

And such is also the destructive power of the tongue: The tongue also is a fire, a world of unrighteousness; the tongue steps forth among our members, and it stains the entire body and inflames the wheel of nature, and itself is inflamed by hell. Like the small firebrand that causes the devastating forest fire, so also is the tongue in its unbridled state. It is a world of unrighteousness, it works a world of mischief, its entire sphere becomes that of iniquity when it begins its transgressions. The tongue steps forth among the members, it assumes the leadership, among them, it rules them, it makes them do its bidding. Thus it happens that it succeeds in staining the whole body, in polluting all the members; it sets in motion and inflames the wheel of nature, the whole circle of innate passions, jealousy, backbiting, slander, blasphemy, and every vile deed. Truly the tongue, if permitted to pursue its course unhindered, is inflamed of hell, is in the control of Satan himself. (Kretzmann)

3:7–8 Though all of creation can be controlled (Gn 1:26–28), no one is able to control the tongue (cf Jas 3:9). (TLSB)

3:7 It may seem, perhaps, that the orator is here carried away by his subject; but any one that has observed the terrible effect of slandering and defaming which is done in our days, as it was hundreds of years ago, will say only that the apostle speaks by way of comparison. In holy indignation he cries out: For every kind of beast and bird, of reptiles and of marine animals, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but the tongue can no one of men tame; that restless evil, full of death-bringing poison. The patience and the ingenuity of man has worked effects approaching the miraculous in taming and in

training animals of every description, mammals, birds, reptiles, and various animals that live in the sea. Though the divine promise of the dominion of man, Gen. 1, 28, has suffered somewhat in consequence of sin, yet the mastery of human beings over the animals cannot be questioned, the latter being kept in subjection both by subtlety and by force. (Kretzmann)

3:8 *no human being can tame the tongue* – The tongue does not operate itself. What James is really getting at is that it is the brain that regulates the tongue. Here is another example of real faith for real life – people who claim to be believers must not let their mouths get out control. Real faith in the Savior welcomes the power of the Spirit to bite back lies, sarcasm, ridicule, gossip, evil suggestions, and praise for evil deeds. Real faith uses the Spirit’s real power to build up other people, speak the truth, compliment, forgive, and comfort. Real faith also knows when to command the tongue to be silent. (PBC)

Talk is not cheap. Words do wound. Words can build up or destroy a person’s self-confidence. Words can turn someone’s proud achievement into humiliation. Words can create or destroy relationship. Words can spread hate or love. Words can spread truth or plant lies. Words can cause suspicion or build trust. (PBC)

But the tongue seems to be beyond the ability of man, to keep in subjection and to tame; all the immeasurable evil that it has caused since the fall of Adam, all the innumerable warnings that have been uttered by the servants of God since that time, have not yet succeeded in curbing its pernicious activity. An unruly, a restless evil, the apostle calls it, one that causes restlessness and disorder, that, upsets all established rules for its control. It is full of death-bringing poison, Rom. 3, 13; the evil which it causes has the same effect as the venom of asps, corroding and killing. (Kretzmann)

full of deadly poison. Profoundly capable of harming others (cf vv 5–6). (TLSB)

3:9 *with it we bless our Lord* – Words are also God’s means to rescue people from hell. A sermon, a Bible study, a catechism lesson, or an evangelism visit over coffee all look tame and ineffectual. But God’s power to save people, to create and sustain saving faith, rides with words. And so the believability of the church’s word – its people and teachers – will have an enormous impact on the believability of the church’s message. (PBC)

In what way this is true, the apostle shows by citing one single instance: With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in the likeness of God; out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. Matters are here represented as they are found in the world and, sad to say, also in the midst of those that bear the name of Christ and confess His holy name. The tongue being the instrument of speech, it is used by believers and even by others for the praise of God, who is our Lord and Father in Christ Jesus. That is as it should be; for we can never adequately sing the praises of Him who has brought us out of the darkness of spiritual death into the marvelous light of His grace. (Kretzmann)

in God’s likeness. Since man has been made like God (Ge 1:26–27), to curse man is like cursing God (see Ge 9:6). (CSB)

All people deserve respect because they are made in the image of God. (TLSB)

3:10 James calls for consistency. The righteous have received the implanted Word (cf 1:20–21) and should live lives that reflect what God has made them to be. (TLSB)

But the sad side of the picture is this, that the same mouth is also used in personal abuse, in cursing a fellow-man, who was created originally in the likeness of God. For God made Adam in His image, and

although the spiritual part of this likeness has been lost as a consequence of the Fall, certain external characteristics still proclaim that man is the crown of created beings. Thus the tongue is made an instrument of evil in calling down God's wrath and punishment upon a fellow-man. There is no excuse for this, neither loss of temper nor heated controversy. It is a vile transgression, an evil habit, aggravated by the fact that blessing and cursing come forth out of the same mouth. Surely the contradiction should at once strike every man that is guilty of such behavior; he ought to feel that such a condition of affairs cannot possibly be reconciled even with common decency. (Kretzmann)

The same tongue is capable of both a "good word" (eulogoumen) concerning God and a curse (*katarōmetha*) against God's most precious creation, another person. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

3:11–12 Creation itself cannot be two different things at once; neither can a person who is re-created by God serve Him and curse others at the same time (cf Mt 7:15–19). (TLSB)

3:11 Solemnly, therefore, the apostle adds: It should not be, my brethren, that these things happen; the mouth which blesses God in fervent prayer should not heap curses upon men at other times; such behavior cannot be reconciled with the Christian profession. (Kretzmann)

3:12 How utterly unreasonable and contradictory the attitude of men is that still are guilty in the manner described, the apostle shows by a few examples: Surely a spring out of the same opening does not send forth sweet and bitter water! A fig-tree, my brethren, surely cannot bring forth olives, or a grape-vine, figs! Neither can salt water yield fresh. Nature itself teaches that the behavior of men as just characterized by the apostle is unnatural, unreasonable. For the same fissure, the same opening of a spring or fountain, cannot bubble up sweet, fresh water, and bitter, brackish water at the same time. A fig-tree will not bear olives, nor a vine, figs, neither can a sweet-water fountain yield salt water and a saltwater spring, or the salty sea, sweet water. How much more does it behoove Christians to watch over their tongues, lest the good and the evil, the wholesome and the foul, be poured forth from the same mouth! (Kretzmann)

GOSPEL – Mark 9:14-29

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. **15** And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. **16** And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" **17** And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. **18** And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." **19** And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." **20** And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. **21** And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. **22** And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." **23** And Jesus said to him, "'If you can'! All things are possible for one who believes." **24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" **25** And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." **26** And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." **27** But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. **28** And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked

him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

9:14 *the other disciples.* The nine besides Peter, James and John (see v. 2). (CSB)

kai elthontes pros tous mathētas, “and when they came to the disciples.” This text follows immediately after the transfiguration. Jesus, Peter, James, and John are rejoining the other nine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

arguing with them – From the heights of the Transfiguration Jesus and the three disciples descended to the realities of life with all its sin and sorrow. The nine were having real difficulty in defending themselves against the teacher’s of the law. Both sides recognized the disciples’ inability to heal this demon-possessed lad as actually reflecting on Jesus Himself. Jesus’ return was opportune timing. (PBC)

Jesus had been gone over night, leaving His other disciples (except Peter, James, and John) in the plain. It is immaterial, once more, whether they were in Galilee or still in the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi at this time; also, whether the apostles in His absence had preached and performed miracles. But when the Lord returned to His disciples, He saw, even from a distance, that there was some unusual commotion. They were in the midst of an excited crowd, and there were some scribes, probably from the neighboring synagog or even from Jerusalem, disputing with them. Things were apparently not running very smoothly in His absence. (Kretzmann)

9:15 Immediately, as soon as the people saw and recognized Jesus, they were amazed with joy. They had not expected to see Him so soon, and matters were approaching a crisis here; so it was with a feeling of relief and joy that they all welcomed Him. Running to Him, they saluted Him most respectfully. The situation is easily conceivable: The disciples have tried to heal the boy and failed; the scribes, delighted with the failure, taunt them with it, and suggest by way of explanation the waning power of the Master, whose name they had vainly attempted to conjure with. The baffled nine make the best defense they can, or perhaps listen in silence. For that reason also the people were delighted to see Christ, because they wanted to see fair play and hoped to see a miracle. (Kretzmann)

9:16 As soon as Jesus came within speaking distance, He inquired about the cause of the disturbance. He asked not only the scribes, but all of them, What is all this disputing about? The scribes had begun the quarrel, and the people had probably taken sides, some with the scribes, some with the apostles. At the approach of Jesus the excitement subsided, both parties being evidently somewhat abashed by His presence. (Kretzmann)

ti suzēteite pros autous, “What are you arguing about?” The exact positions being attacked and defended are not clear, but it seems likely that the scribes (v 14) were seizing upon the disciples’ failure to cast out the demon (v 18) as an opportunity to discredit Jesus. The scribes (experts in or teachers of the Mosaic Law and, as lawyers, highly inclined to debate) have for some time been active naysayers toward Jesus (2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:5). In particular, they have been critical of Jesus casting out demons: “ ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul,’ and ‘by the prince of demons he casts out the demons’ ” (3:22). Even the disciples themselves were territorial about who might be properly authorized to exorcise (9:38). In other words, a disciple’s power to cast out demons—or his failure to do so—would say much about the credibility of the master. In the minds of Jesus’ opponents, the disciples’ inability to cast out this demon built their case that Jesus himself was a fraud. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

9:17 *a spirit that makes him mute.* Other spirits had been vocal (cf 1:24; 5:7). (TLSB)

But one man out of the multitude, whose interest was a very natural and deep one, separated himself from the rest and stood forth, answering. He had brought his son, seeking the Lord in the place where the disciples were; but, Jesus being absent, he had appealed to the disciples to heal the boy, and they had not been able to do so. It was a pitiful tale which the man told. His son was lunatic, Matt. 17, 15, and possessed with a spirit, a demon that prevented his speaking. (Kretzmann)

9:18 Demonic possession was responsible for the boy's condition (see vv. 20, 25–26). (CSB)

The symptoms resemble the major form of epilepsy. The reference to a dumb and deaf spirit implies that the child's situation was aggravated by an inability to speak or hear. What was involved, however, was not simply a chronic nervous disorder but demonic possession. The violence of the seizures and the reference to repeated attempts to destroy the youth by hurling him into a fire or water, indicate that the purpose of demonic possession is to distort the image of God in man. That this destruction should be heaped upon a child only serves to indicate how radical the issue is between demonic power and Jesus, the bestower of life. (Lane)

The boy's organ of speech and all his members were normal, but the spirit held them in bonds. And not only that: the demon at times took hold of him and threw him into paroxysms, or cramps, in which the boy foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth, until his body could no longer stand the strain, when he swooned away in a stupor, much like the withering of a branch under a sudden scorching blast. This recital of troubles and the fruitless effort to become rid of them affected the Lord very deeply and caused Him to voice a bitter complaint. (Kretzmann)

9:18 His condition resembled an epileptic seizure, causing recurring convulsions and loss of consciousness, but was caused by demon possession. Cf Mt. 17:15. (TLSB)

9:19 *them*. The father, disciples, and the gathering crowd. (TLSB)

O faithless generation – genea apistos, “faithless generation.” Every principal in the narrative falls under this criticism: the scribes, obviously, but also the father and the disciples. Notice, however, that *apistos* does not necessarily mean “without saving faith.” The father did have faith. So did the disciples. But both also struggled with unbelief. On the other hand, we should also understand that the disciples' failure to cast out the demon was not because their faith was not strong enough. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

how long am I to bear with – He was now well into the third year of instructing His disciples and thus wondered out loud when they would ever learn. How much longer would it take? (PBC)

The father and crowd had likely despaired while Jesus was absent on the mount. Note the amazement in v. 15 cf. 6:6; Lk. 24:32, 41) (TLSB)

Note: His cry about the unbelief of the generation among which He was laboring, His wish to be freed from their presence, was directed to the whole nation of the Jews. They all, with very few exceptions, had heard the Word of the Gospel with ears that heard not. The number of disciples of Jesus was very small after all His efforts, and the number of believers still smaller. Even the apostles, in spite of their confession concerning Jesus the Christ, were still affected with the unbelief of the great mass of the Jews. Upon Christ's command they now brought the boy to Him. (Kretzmann)

9:20 No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that

he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God. (Kretzmann)

9:21 Jesus showed interest in the boy, who was more to Jesus than a subject for a demonstration. (TLSB)

No sooner, however, had the boy caught sight of the Lord than the spirit gave a demonstration of his hatred against Jesus and of his spite against the handiwork of God. He tore and twisted the sick boy in a ghastly manner, inflicting torments of every kind upon his body, as in extreme St. Vitus's dance, so that he finally fell to the ground in convulsions, where he rolled about foaming. It was an awful exhibition of the power of Satan over the body of the boy, well calculated to teach his great strength and his lasting hatred against all the works of God. (Kretzmann)

9:22, 24 *ei ti dunēi . . . pisteuō boēthei mou tēi apistiai*, “If you can do anything. . . . I believe; help my unbelief!” A realistic articulation of every Christian’s faith. Like every member of the invisible Church, the father believed in Christ. But also as in every believer, the old Adam, unbelief, persisted. We all doubt (disbelieve!) that Christ either can or will give us particular best things at particular best times. This does not mean we have ceased to have faith and have lost our eternal salvation, but certainly is a begging to be reassured by God’s Word and Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

9:22 *to destroy him*. He had not prevented his physical growth, but had given every other evidence of his hateful presence by causing him to throw himself into fire, to be burned to death, and into water, to be drowned. We cannot be far wrong in believing that similar symptoms and experiences even today, as convulsions, madness, delirium, lunacy, and others, are due to the hatred of Satan. But it is self-evident that the devil has only so much power over the bodies of men as is permitted him by God. So God had frustrated all attempts of the devil upon the life of that boy. Some one always had been present to save his life. Now the father appeals to Christ: Give us help and have mercy upon us! This was a sincere prayer, but unfortunately he modified it by saying: If Thou art in any way able. Here unbelief was battling with belief; he was not quite certain in his trust in Jesus. He implied some doubt as to His ability to help in this severe case of need. Jesus therefore takes time to correct this feeling, using, in a reproving way, almost the same words that the man had used towards Him: If thou only wert able. (Kretzmann)

9:23 *If you can? . . . all things are possible for him who believes*. The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy but whether the father had faith to believe it. A person who truly believes will set no limits on what God can do. (CSB)

The power and love of God are constant (Ps. 62:11-12). Faith receives the gifts God had prepared (cf. 11:22-24| James 1:5-8). (TLSB)

The father’s faith had nose-dived because the disciples had been unable to help him. But Jesus encouraged him. (PBC)

Here is the difficulty, the grievous mistake; there is still doubt in your heart. It is a favorite reference of Jesus that He here employs: All things are possible to him that believes. True faith has miraculous, heaven-storming qualities, Matt. 17, 20; Phil. 4, 13. This word had the desired effect with the distraught father. It opened his eyes to his lack of faith. (Kretzmann)

9:24 *I believe; help my unbelief!* Since faith is never perfect, belief and unbelief are often mixed. (CSB)

The father cried out with faith but struggled with his son’s burden and the failure of the disciples (cf. Rom. 7). “Worthiness does not depend on the greatness or smallness, the weakness or strength of faith.

Instead, it depends on Christ's merit, which the distressed father of little faith (Mark 9:24) enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful strong faith" (FC SD VII 71). (TLSB)

It was a confession Jesus honored. For this father Jesus both healed his son and strengthened his faith. (PBC)

In deep humility he cries out: I believe; come to the assistance of my unbelief. As in the heart of all Christians, belief and unbelief were battling in his heart. But now faith and trust in the Lord were supreme. He trusts entirely in the help of Christ, also against that evil of unbelief that thrusts its head up now and then in his heart. On the part of God all things are possible, if the believer will but accept by faith what God has long ago prepared for him and enabled him to receive through help from above. (Kretzmann)

9:25-26 The mute spirit cried out and left the healed boy who appeared to be dead. (TLSB)

9:25 *he rebuked the evil spirit.* As much as possible, Jesus wanted to avoid further publicity. (CSB)

Meanwhile the people were coming running from all directions, and Jesus wanted to avoid unwelcome publicity. He therefore earnestly reprimanded the unclean spirit, who here caused deafness and dumbness in the boy, giving him the direct command to go out from him and to stay out. (Kretzmann)

9:26 The devil must needs obey, but in doing so, he wreaks his vengeance upon the boy for the last time, throwing him into such terrible convulsions as he went forth from him that the boy fell down as one dead, and many openly declared their belief that he was dead. (Kretzmann)

9:27 lifted him up – The dethroning of Satan is always a reversal of death and an affirmation of life. (Lane)

But when Jesus took him by the hand, he could readily get up and stand. Thus the glory of God, which Jesus, the Man, possessed, was once more made evident in this miracle. The Son of God had again triumphed over the devil. There is lasting comfort in this fact for all believers that put their trust unwaveringly in Christ, the Son of the living God. These the devil, with all his might and cunning, cannot harm. And though he should succeed in killing the body, the soul is safe in the hands of the heavenly Father. (Kretzmann)

9:28 *entered the house* – Jesus often gathered the disciples by themselves after a significant event (1:29; 4:10; 4:34; 9:33). (TLSB)

The failure of the disciples to effect a cure in this case, when there had been instances of success, chapter 6, 13, perplexed them very much. They had also been deeply humiliated before the people by the sneering remarks of the scribes. When Jesus therefore came into the house where He, and probably His disciples with Him, was staying, they took the opportunity to speak to Him all alone in regard to their failure to expel the devil. Christ's answer was of a nature to cause deep humility in their hearts and to encourage them to strive for a firmer trust in Him. The question of the disciples implied: We surely had faith; we had the definite expectation to effect this cure, but we were sadly disappointed. (Kretzmann)

9:29 *This kind.* Seems to suggest that there are different kinds of demons. (CSB)

There are different types of demons with different powers. The disciples' earlier success in exorcism (6:13) had either not prepared them for this case or made them overconfident in their own work. (TLSB)

cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.† The disciples apparently had taken for granted the power given to them or had come to believe that it was inherent in them. Lack of prayer indicated they had forgotten that their power over the demonic spirits was from Jesus (see 3:15; 6:7, 13). Faith works through prayer (see v. 23). (CSB)

ei mē en proseuchēi, lit., “except by prayer.” Prayer is not being offered as a magic formula, nor is “this kind” (*touto to genos*) more resistant to exorcism and thus requiring additional power to be cast out. The only power—of prayer and to cast out demons—is Christ himself. The point apparently is that the disciples had forgotten this. They had been successful in casting out demons before (6:13) by the power of Christ (6:7), but now, it appears, they had come to think the power was their own. Praying for God’s help to drive out this demon would have been an expression of dependence on him, a trust that he and he alone could do the work. In this sense, any demon and any other challenge is overcome only by prayer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The disciples had been tempted to believe that the gift they had received from Jesus was in their control and could be exercised at their disposal. This was a subtle form of unbelief, for it encouraged them to trust in themselves rather than in God. They had to learn that their previous success in expelling demons provided no guarantee of continued power. Rather the power of God must be asked for on each occasion in radical reliance upon His ability alone. When faith confronts the demonic, God’s omnipotence is its sole assurance, and God’s sovereignty is its only restriction. This is the faith which experiences the miracle of deliverance. (Lane)

9:14–29 Jesus descends from the transfiguration and meets a defiant demon, an anxious father, an astonished crowd, and despairing disciples. Despair threatens to overwhelm our faith too by pointing out how we fail to change or improve, suggesting that God neither cares for us nor has power to help. However, Jesus does not linger in the glory of the transfiguration, but graciously descends to a world of despair and doubt so that He might deliver us. • Lord, thank You for Your compassion, which brings You to our world of pain and dismay. Give us faith to overcome our doubts, and help us believe that all things are possible with You. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

9:30-37 This pericope tells how Jesus provided the Twelve with special training as they traveled around Galilee. At the Transfiguration three of them saw Jesus’ unveiled glory. Less than a year remains before Good Friday and Easter. The Lord’s thoughts are already fastened on the suffering that awaits him, while the disciples focus on status and competition. Jesus intends, by his impending Passion and the value of humble service, to turn around their thinking about what matters and what does not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

9:30-32 The great Galilean ministry has ended. Now Jesus devotes less effort to public preaching and more to teaching the Twelve. He needs privacy. For the second time he speaks plainly about his approaching suffering, death, and resurrection (see 9:9–10), but “they did not understand what he meant” (v 32). They cannot figure out how his betrayal and death fit with his words about the kingdom of God and Good News (see Adolf Schiatter, *Die Evangelien nach Markus and Lukas* [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961] 93–94). Why do they not tell their Master they are confused? Perhaps because they fear Jesus just might tell them the truth regarding all this! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Second of Jesus' three predictions of His death and resurrection. The disciples' confusion continued, even though Jesus taught them repeatedly. Luther: "The Law attacks Him and kills Him. By this deed the whole world is purged and expiated from all sins and thus it is set free from death and from every evil. But when sin and death have been abolished by this one man, God does not want to see anything else in the whole world, especially if it were to believe, except sheer cleansing and righteousness. And if any remnants of sin were to remain, still for the sake of Christ, the shining Sun, God would not notice them" (AE 26:280).