

## Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

**6** Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, **7** O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth! **10** They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth.

**11** Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. **12** For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.

**13** Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time. **14** Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. **15** Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

**5:6** *seek* - The imperative “seek the LORD” (*dirshu*) calls Israel back to who they actually are, the people of God. The verb “seek” (*drsh*) is used primarily in cultic practice as the God of Israel demands that his people seek only him. All else is worship of gods that do not exist and cannot help them. Failure to “seek the Lord” so will result in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (here represented by the “house of Joseph”—that is, his descendants in Manasseh and Ephraim, the dominant tribes of the North). So complete will be the destruction of the North that no one will be available to quench the fire at their main sanctuary in Bethel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The places of idolatry were doomed; yet if Israel turned to God, there was hope for her as a nation. Otherwise the people, too, would be destroyed. (CSB)

*house of Joseph*. The northern kingdom of Israel, dominated by the tribe of Ephraim, descendants of Joseph (also in v. 15; 6:6). (CSB)

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

*Bethel*. The main religious center of the northern kingdom (see 7:13; see also 3:14; 4:4; 7:10). The god the Israelites worshiped there would be powerless to save the place when the true God brought his judgment. (CSB)

**5:7** *wormwood*. Bitter plant with a repulsive taste. Accordingly, it represents sorrow (Pr 5:4; Lm 3:15). Once again, Amos rails against the prevalent injustice of his day, esp the abuse of the poor (cf 2:7–8; 3:10; 4:1). (TLSB)

*turn justice to wormwood*. They corrupted the procedures and institutions of justice (the courts), making them instruments of injustice (“bitterness”). Turning God’s order upside down is inevitable in a society that ignores his law and despises true religion (see 6:12). (CSB)

Justice (*mishpat*) is to be practiced throughout the nation especially on behalf of the poor and powerless. Israel is said to turn (*hahopākim*, “turn, overturn”) justice to “wormwood”, i.e., bitterness (see 6:12). A false worship of God (v 6) has implications beyond discrete moments of worship; it infects the entire life of the people. Justice becomes bitterness and righteousness ( *tsēdakah*) is cast down. Contrast this to the

Lord himself, who turns (*tsalmavet*) darkness into light (vv 8–9). Note: vv 8–9 form a parenthetical remark between v 7 and v 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

13, which (in the Hebrew) use the third person, while the preceding passage (vv. 11–12a) uses the second person. The indictment of vv. 7, 10, 12b–13 is therefore more objective and descriptive, while that of vv. 11–12a is more direct and pointed. (CSB)

The prophet here switches from the second person to the third person in order to objectively describe the prevailing injustice in Israel. The gate (*sha'ar*) of the city (also mentioned in v 12) is where one might come to have his case heard and receive justice (the *shapat* of v 7; see Job 29:7). But there the failure of Israel to “seek the Lord” (v 6) is manifested in the hatred of the one who reproves them and the abominating of the one who “speaks the truth” (or, more literally, the “plain speaker,” *dober tamim*). A corrupt people cannot abide anyone who directly speaks the truth without concern for “political correctness,” ancient or modern. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*reproves ... tells the truth.* Those who are concerned that the courts uphold justice. (CSB)

*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** Note the change from the indefinite “They” in v 10 to the accusation “you” in vv 11–12—this becomes a pointed, personal rebuke. (TLSB)

*trample* - Amos now returns to the direct speech of the second person plural—“you trample” (*boshaskem*) and “you exact” (*tikhu*) taxes. These injustices are committed against the poor, who have no power or resources to defend themselves. Because you have built stone houses (stone was a construction material indicating wealth) and planted vineyards funded by your exploitation of others, you will be denied residence in those houses and the luxury of the produce of the vineyard. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*taxes of grain.* Taxes were one way the poor were exploited rather than protected (cf Lv 25:35–37; Dt 23:19). (TLSB)

*him.* The poor who actually worked the land. The unrighteous wealthy not only profited from their labor but also imposed unjust taxes on the poor. (TLSB)

*you have built.* God would take away their prized possessions acquired through wrongful gain. Their prosperity would be turned to grief (cf. Dt 28:30, 38–40). (CSB)

*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** *many...transgressions...great...sins* – Outstanding even in the midst of a nation steeped in wickedness. (Kretzmann)

*turn aside the needy* – The poor were without champions of their right and were obliged to bow to the mighty, a condition which still prevails almost universally. (Kretzmann)

Here the imagery of the gate of the city (v 10) returns—and the prophet explicitly and pointedly (“you”) condemns the turning aside of the needy (*'ebyonim*), that is, the poor and oppressed. This, compounded with afflicting the righteous and taking bribes, is condemned with the intensified compounding of two

words: “transgressions” (*pish‘ekem*) and “sin” (*chatotekem*). Of these, the prophet, speaking for the Lord, states, “I know . . .” The oppression of human beings and the suppression of justice do not escape the attention of the God of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*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** *prudent.* He knows he cannot change the state of affairs, and therefore only awaits judgment. (CSB)

When things have reached such extremities as here pictured, all admonitions are futile. Still the love of the prophet for his people and his desire to further their welfare in every possible way causes him to address them once more. (Kretzmann)

*kept silent* - Therefore, the prophet continues, the “prudent” (ESV) will keep silent. The LXX translates the Hebrew *hammasbil* with the participle *sunion*, both meaning to “understand” or “comprehend”; thus, the translation “prudent.” The idea here is not so much prudence as wisdom, but rather as understanding and recognizing the realities of an evil time. Such prudence motivates not action but silence in the face of evil. Contrast this self-preserving and self-serving silence with what happens when one “reproves in the gate” and “speaks the truth”; such people are “hated” and “abhorred” (v 10). These are the two options, then, in the face of evil: either the “prudence” of silence or else giving a voice to those who have no voice. Which results in the blessing of God? This the prophet will answer in vv 14–15. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

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

**5:14-15** These verses should be considered together, because here the prophet points to the change that must occur. The verb *drsh*, “seek,” was used in v 6 with the Lord as the object (*dirshu* et *YHWH*); here it is used with “good” (*tob*) rather than evil (*ra‘*) in the midst of an “evil time” (*‘et ra ‘ah*; v 13). How is this done? Through the polar opposite of the prevailing culture of injustice and oppression: “Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate.” Indeed, one must speak rather than prudently remain silent, but one must also act. Twice God is referred to as “the LORD, the God of hosts” (*YHWH ‘elohe-tesba’ot*)—indeed, a third time as well in v 16). A remnant of the northern tribes (“Joseph”) will be preserved by the grace of God even in the face of the coming Assyrian destruction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**5:14** *Seek good.* Cf. “Seek me” (v. 4); see Isa 1:16–17. (CSB)

*that you may live.* The purpose is more definitely expressed than in vv. 4, 6, and the way to change is explicit. (CSB)

*God of hosts.* This name becomes a refrain (vv 15–16), recurring twice more. (TLSB)

*be with you.* As your security and source of blessing. (CSB)

During the days of the patriarchs, the Lord had made promises to be with people at both Beersheba (Gn 26:24; 46:1–4) and Bethel (Gn 28:15, 19). Incredibly, those showing utter contempt for the Lord and His covenant during Amos’s time were still claiming this promise as their own. (TLSB)

**5:15** *establish justice.* Stark contrast to what was happening in Israel. Notice the literary structure of vv 14–15: seek good, not evil/hate evil, love good. (TLSB)

*remnant*. Implies that a change now would benefit the individual survivors of the disaster, though the nation as a whole would perish. (CSB)

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. Cf Is 10:21–23. Amos’s last oracle similarly speaks of God restoring the faithful remnant (9:11–15). (TLSB)

To the few of the northern nation who would be left after the punishment now impending. (Kretzmann)

**5:16–17** A return to the theme of lament with which this section began (vv. 1–2). (CSB)

#### EPISTLE – Hebrews 3:12-19

**12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” 16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**

**3:12** *lest there be in any of you an evil...fall 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)

This is all about the refusal to trust in God’s promises. It alludes to Numbers 14, where the people refused to trust that God would give them the Promised Land. (TLSB)

Unbelief is always a heart problem, one that deals with the inner being. And unbelief is always serious because it rejects Christ’s salvation. (PBC)

The unbelieving heart against which the author warns each of his readers is one “that turns away from the living God.” It is not a matter of casual drifting but of deliberate desertion by hearts which once heard and believed, but then cut themselves off from the living God. Were any of the readers inclined because persecution’s heat to rebel against Jesus by turning back to Judaism? Let them be warned! To turn away from Jesus is to reject the living God. In John 5:23 Jesus said, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him.”

Hebrews 10:31, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

The sacred writer, having inserted this quotation with its warning lesson, takes up the thread of his argument once more, in driving home the moral of the story: See to it, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. The earnest anxiety of the writer is apparent in the entire structure of the sentence, which, incidentally, is contracted as if he had written in great agitation. They should see to it, they should take heed, lest perhaps, by any bad chance, there might be in any one of the readers a bad, wicked, evil heart, caused by a condition of unbelief. For this condition would show itself in departing from the living God. The Lord is the Author and Source of life; not only is He able to come to the assistance of all people that are in need, but He is the only One that can transmit

and keep the one true life in the hearts of those that are His own. Should a believer, therefore, scorn and spurn the fellowship of God by departing from Him and His life, he would have only himself to blame for the final damnation which would come upon him. (Kretzmann)

*the living God.* God actively sees into the hearts of all people and makes a just judgment (Heb 10:30b–31). (TLSB)

**3:13** *exhort one another every day* – All of them needed constant encouragement from one another. Sin can be so violently deceitful. It disguises its horrible purpose, dilutes its poisonous tastes and in the end utterly destroys. Did the sin of turning from Christ back to Judaism seem not so serious, perhaps even prudent in face of persecution? “Watch out,” the author warns, “that is sin’s deceitful course and can lead to hardened hearts.” “Help each other watch out,” the author also urges, reminding his readers that no believer exists as an island. Christian faith and spiritual health are not just matters between a man and his God. They are of vital concern among fellow believers. Gathering together in local congregations is more than advisable; it is necessary so that we can “encourage one another daily.” (PBC)

Christians addressed here may have gathered daily in their homes for prayer. (TLSB)

*as long as it is called Today.* See 4:7. This is still the day of divine grace and opportunity to trust God, but it will not last indefinitely. (CSB)

The sacred writer, therefore, continues his warning on the positive side: Rather admonish one another every day, so long as that period endures which is called “today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceit of sin. This is one of the functions of their calling which Christians should be glad to take upon themselves, to exhort, to admonish one another, to spur one another on in sanctification. It is a kindness which is not a mere matter indifferent, but whose manifestation is required by the duty which Christians owe one another. Sanctification in every Christian congregation is a matter calling for constant vigilance, for the practice of love which must be carried on daily, day after day. For now is God’s great Today, now is the time of grace, now is the time that He wants us to listen to His wonderful invitation to the heavenly meal. So long as God still issues His pleading call, we should take heed to pay attention to it quickly; for we do not know when this time of grace may come to an end. And there is always the danger of being hardened by a neglect of the Word in time. Sin is present in so many pleasant and deceitful guises, and the devil is so unusually proficient in his ability to make the greatest defections from the will of God appear as mere innocent pastimes, that it requires the most vigilant care on the part of every Christian lest he become callous to the pleadings of the Word of God and become a prey to eternal death. Sin in heart or life blinds a person to the beauty and the meaning of God’s wonderful offer of salvation. (Kretzmann)

*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** *to share in Christ.* To belong to him and participate in the blessings (cf. v. 1). (CSB)

We are fellow believers and partners with Christ. (TLSB)

*hold our original confidence firm to the end.* Salvation is evidenced by continuing in faith to the end. Such perseverance reveals those who share in Christ (see note on v. 6). (CSB)

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)

Believers share so much in Christ and have so much more waiting for them. All that the heaven-sent Savior offers is ours “if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.” What a firm, confident stand those readers had when first brought to faith. How sad if any were now to turn out like the rocky soil of Mark 4:16-17, where the seed of faith “lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” (PBC)

To the observance of this vigilance we should be inspired also by another consideration: For partakers of Christ we have become, if we but hold firm the beginning of our confidence to the end. Cp. v.6. This is a thought which is often brought out by the Apostle Paul when he warns the Christians against carnal security, and by Peter, when he bids us make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1, 10. We must never lose sight of the fact that by our conversion we have partaken and are now partaking of Jesus Christ, of all the blessings and gifts which He has earned for us by His redemption. This fact, however, puts us under the obligation of remaining in His grace, of keeping unto the end at least that amount of firm confidence in His redemption which is the essence of faith. So sure must the believer’s confidence in His Lord be that it will withstand all attacks until the end, till it will be beyond trial and temptation, finally triumphant, in the presence of Christ. Firmness, confidence, faithfulness, are required of all disciples of the Lord Jesus. (Kretzmann)

**3:15** The inspired author here defines and justifies his use of the word “today” in connection with his warning to all believers to remain steadfast to the end: in that it is said, Today when you hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation (at Meribah). (Kretzmann)

Luther says, “Since we have begun happily, just as they had – let us fear, lest by defecting we abandon ‘the beginning of the substance,’ as they abandoned it and deserted.” (TLSB)

**3:16–19** The argument is pursued with a series of rhetorical questions. The important truths are that the people who failed to enter Canaan were the ones who had heard God’s promise concerning the land and that they refused to believe what God had promised (v. 19)—an action described as rebellion (v. 16), sin (v. 17) and disobedience (v. 18). Consequently, God in his anger closed the doors of Canaan in the face of that whole generation of Israelites (Nu 14:21–35). First-century readers of Hebrews faced a similar danger spiritually.

Once more the author warns his readers about hardening their hearts. With the series of hard-hitting questions he drives home his point. “Who were they who heard and rebelled?” Not people were ignorant or had never experienced God’s wondrous works and ways, but “all those Moses led out of Egypt.” With whom was he angry for forty years?” Not with those who didn’t know any better or were innocent, but “those who sinned.” God’s anger is not capricious or hasty. (PBC)

Forty years of rejection and rebellion by those who had richly experienced divine providence was the cause of all those graves dotting the desert. “And to whom did God swear that they would never enter His rest?” To people who had no excuse whatsoever, to those who knew better and yet disobeyed, refusing to believe. Can any reader miss the point? “So we see,” the author concludes, “that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.” What robbed that generation of Israel of rest both in the earthly and heavenly Canaans? The answer is, “Unbelief.” Will the consequences be any less severe for those who would turn away from the superior Jesus today? (PBC)

So much seems to be demanded of those first readers and of us today. The race of faith is to be all out all the time; the course on which it is run is hazardous and obstacle filled; and it never lets up! How can we do it? How can we hold out? Fix your thoughts on Jesus,” the author urges, “the apostle and the high priest whom we confess.” Let that superior Jesus and His Word be the sure basis of our confidence. God rest our faith not on what we are, but on what Jesus is: not on what we do, but on what Jesus has done.

Then our journey in life's wilderness, unlike Israel's, will have both a good beginning and a good end. (PBC)

**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)

**3:16** Ps. 95, 7. 8. This present day is the time of which we may be sure; we know that the Lord's grace is being proclaimed to us now. It is now, therefore, that we should heed the Lord's warning and make the most of the present opportunity. For the dangers attending an insolent testing of God's patience are such as to make salvation a matter of chance and gambling: For some, having heard, yet provoked Him; was it not all that had gone forth from Egypt through Moses? Although all the children of Israel that went forth from Egypt heard the Word and will of God, yet they deliberately and maliciously challenged God's government and set about to embitter and provoke Him. And, unfortunately, there was not much choice among the rebellious people; they were all guilty of this provoking conduct, all the men that left Egypt under the leadership of Moses. It was not a case of having a few exceptional sinners to deal with, the whole mass of the gloriously rescued people whose faith had "carried them through between the threatening walls of water and over whom Miriam sang her triumphal ode," were in the same condemnation. (Kretzmann)

**3:17** The sacred writer, drawing another lesson from the incidents in the wilderness, asks: But with whom was He angry, exasperated, forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? It was not a matter of change of mind, of foolish caprice on God's part, nor was it lack of power to carry out His promise to the children of Israel. But their conduct provoked His anger, their sins challenged His punishment, the result being that all the men of twenty years and over that had left the land of Egypt sank into forgotten graves in the wilderness. That was God's punishment upon them because of their sin. (Kretzmann)

**3:18** The author, therefore, concludes his series of rhetorical questions by asking: And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest unless it was to them that believed not? Not disobedience primarily, but unbelief, which was the cause of the various outbreaks against the Lord, caused the punishment to strike them. Moses freely and frankly told the people this very fact, Num. 14, 28-35. God finally affirmed with an oath that He would pour out His punishments, having the soundest reasons for vindicating His course of action. (Kretzmann)

**3:19** They did not reach the Land of Promise, they did not enter into the blessings of rest and peace which the Lord had promised to obedient, believing children. The conclusion of the sacred author emphasizes just this one point: And we see that they could not enter in on account of their unbelief. They could not reach their goal, the end of the way, because at the bottom of their entire unruly conduct lay the refusal to believe in the Lord, their God, with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind. Their example should have its proper effect upon the Christians of all times. Every attention to sin with its deceitfulness, every shrinking from conflict in the interest of the Lord, endangers the faith, if it does not outright pluck it out of the heart. Our trust in God, to be of the right kind, must be centered in the promises of Scriptures and not permit itself to be moved from this foundation. There is too much at stake to make light of the matter or fatuously to rely upon a safe solution in the future. Today the Lord is calling; today we should give heed. To-morrow may be too late. Our Mediator is in every respect greater than Moses, but for that very reason we should cling to Him in all humility of heart. (Kretzmann)

God was willing to give His people rest, but His people were unwilling to receive it. People's unbelief – their lack of confidence in the promises of God – rendered them incapable of experiencing the blessings that flow from trust. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 10:17-22

**17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” 20 And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” 21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.**

**10:17** *as he was setting out – kai ekporeuomenou autou eis hodon*, “And as he was setting out on his journey.” In a noteworthy manner, Mark begins this pericope with a statement about Jesus’ journey, his journey to the cross. Christ had already predicted his death and resurrection two times (8:31; 9:31). Immediately after the account of the rich young man (10:17–31), Jesus foretells his death and resurrection a third time (10:32–34). Therefore, this Gospel pericope is closely couched between two death predictions. With his sacrifice so imminent, totally upon him, and devoid of sinful human contribution, one might expect Jesus’ dissatisfaction with this young man’s arrogant statement of “What must I do to inherit eternal life.” Yet on his way to the cross, Jesus loves even this man for whom he came and for whom he would also die. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The genitive absolute tense likely pictures Jesus emerging from the house mentioned in verse 10. Perhaps this young man was waiting for Jesus to emerge. Mark’s account is more vivid than that of Matthew and Luke. Matthew 2 19:16-17 supplements are this point. He not only addressed Jesus as "good" but also asked what "good" He should do. Negative higher critics claim that Matthew rewrote Mark to tone down the harsh theology. That implies, of course, that it didn't really happen and plainly maintains that the authors of the Gospels determined the character of theology. The young man uses the word "good" in the unregenerate sense, not the Biblical sense. Just because people call Jesus "good" does not mean they are believers nor that they know what is truly good. "Inherit" in this context means "acquire." Beck: "To get." NEB: "To win." He wants to earn it. (Buls)

*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)

*prosdamōn heis kai gonupetēsas*, “a man ran up and knelt.” Although a wealthy man was apt to seek out the best and most popular teacher, he would typically not humble himself before the teacher. These facts make the young man’s actions most remarkable. The two participles (*prosdramōn*, *gonupetēsas*) demonstrate this man’s deep humility before Jesus, since both involve degradation for a rich man in Jesus’ day. The verb *gonupeteō* indicates kneeling or falling upon one’s knee in prayer and supplication (Mt 17:14; Mk 1:40; cf. Lk 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5) or in homage as in Mk 10:17. Such kneeling sometimes involves mockery as the misguided soldiers who mistreated Jesus (Mt 27:29). This young man, although not kneeling in mockery, was confused about the person and work of Christ. He saw Jesus as the perfect source of Law information rather than his Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

After the incident with the young children, Jesus continued His journey, He went out and forward on His way. The inevitableness of the Passion and the end of Christ's life is always indicated in the gospels. Here one, a certain man, according to Luke, 18:18, a ruler, the chief elder of a synagogue in the neighborhood, stopped the Lord. The man came running to Him, He was much disturbed and excited; He threw Himself down upon his knees before Jesus. As an elder of the synagogue he was fully acquainted with the laws and traditions of the elders, with all the customary interpretation of the various observances in vogue



among the Jews. But he derived no satisfaction from that knowledge, he found no peace for his soul in the round of works prescribed there. (Kretzmann)

The eager approach of a man while Jesus was setting out on his way, his kneeling posture, the formal address together with the weighty character of his question all suggest deep respect for Jesus and genuine earnestness on the part of the man himself. He came to consult Jesus as a distinguished rabbi and showed him the deference reserved for revered teachers of the Law. (Lane)

*good teacher* – On the OT and subsequent Judaism only God is characteristically called “good,” although it was possible to speak in a derived sense of “the good man” (e.g. Prov. 12:2; 14:14; Eccl. 9:2; Mt 12:35). The designation of Jesus as “good teacher,” however, is virtually without parallel in Jewish sources and should be regarded as a sincere tribute to the impression He had made upon the man, whether “good” be understood to signify “kind,” “generous,” or some other quality goodness. (Lane)

*poiēsō*: The aorist of the verb *poieō* can indicate a single or short-term action. Namely, having lived an “exemplary” life, the young man asks what heroic deed he must yet add to his trophies in order to inherit eternal life. Although well-intentioned in the way of the Law, he does not take the Law to its fullest extent, namely, to convict rather than confirm. He expects to find a Jesus of enlightened information to show him what he must do. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*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)

Inheritance is not given based on merit. (TLSB)

*klēronomēsō*: The young man shows his confusion of Law and Gospel through his usage of the verb *klēronomeō*. In the Bible, the verb often connotes the reception of a gift, particularly the kingdom of God (Mt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:50; Gal 5:21) and eternal life (Mt 19:29; Mk 10:17; Lk 10:25; 18:18). The verb can also refer to a gift received after a death (Gal 4:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The new Teacher would probably be able to help him solve the serious problem which he was battling with, the question of how to obtain the assurance of peace with God. His cry is: Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? It is a cry which thousands of anxious souls that have been taught the way of works and self-righteousness have echoed since, not only among the Jews, but in all church bodies where salvation by man's own deeds is taught, Acts 16, 30. Note: The man speaks of doing something, of earning, if possible; and he wants to be considered an heir of eternal life, one for whom the glories will be laid up in heaven, in safe-keeping. (Kretzmann)

*eternal life*. The question concerning the inheritance of eternal life, which has formal parallels in early Jewish material, places the discussion which follows in an eschatological perspective. The form of the question (What must I do to inherit eternal life?) implies a piety of achievement which stands in contrast to Jesus' teaching that a man must receive the Kingdom (or life) as a gift from God in his helplessness (10:15). In the light of verse 20, the man evidently thought that there were conditions to be fulfilled beyond those set forth in the Law. (Lane)

**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)

Jesus changes the focus from the man's works to who God is. (TLSB)

Jesus does not say that He is not good nor does He deny that He is God.

Bengel: The young man perceived in Jesus the presence of goodness in some degree; otherwise he would not have applied to Him: but he did not perceive it in its full extent: otherwise he would not have left Him. Much less did he perceive His Godhead. Wherefore, Jesus does not accept from him the title of goodness without the title of Godhead.(Buls)

Jesus overlooks the title "teacher" and instead comments on "good," which the man rightly employs. While many teachers exist, only one is good, namely, the one who pronounced all things good at creation. Thus, Jesus implies his identity in his response. However, the young man does not catch the meaning or comment on it. Otherwise, he would not dare to flash his own righteousness. Indeed, the young man fails to see God hidden in the humanity of Jesus. He does not recognize his Creator and Savior in the flesh of Christ and, thus, pursues human glory (works) rather than the cross (salvation). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Jesus does not answer his question directly, but by skillful catechizing tries to lead him to the right understanding of his petition and its fulfillment. Taking up the man's address first, He asks him why he applies the attribute "good" to Him. Far from rejecting the appellation, Jesus accepts it at once, but He wants the young man to understand the full import of the word. In calling Jesus good, he attributed to Him a quality of God Himself, he placed Him on a level with God, all of which is right and good. God is good; Jesus is good : they are on the same level. (Kretzmann)

**10:19** *do not defraud.*† The prohibition of fraud may have represented the ninth and tenth commandments (against covetousness). If so, Jesus here mentions all seven commandments that prohibit wrong actions and attitudes against one's fellowman (see Ex 20:12–16; Dt 5:16–21). (CSB)

This young man needs Law to show him his sin. Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24. Jesus quotes commandments 5 through 8. "Do no defraud" has been interpreted variously:

- a. Lenski: Sum of ninth and tenth commandments;
- b. Beck: Don't rob;
- c. Hendriksen: "Do not withhold from your neighbor the love you owe him."

The fourth commandment is quoted last. Jesus quotes only the second table of the Law, for in this way He can the more quickly show this man his sin. That becomes clear in verse 21. (Buls)

*tas entolas*: When one comes to Jesus with a Law approach, one will likely get a Law response. Jesus emphasizes the accusation of the Law by placing *tas entolas*, the object, before the subject and verb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Now as for his question, Jesus reminds him of the fulfillment of the Law, since the perfect keeping of God's commandments, as the ruler had learned, would give him the assurance of heaven. The Lord mentions a few of the precepts of the Moral Law, those against adultery, against murder, against theft and robbery, against false witness, against fraud, and that demanding obedience to the parents. Note: The sequence of the commandments is immaterial. Jesus mentions only such as pertain to the second table, since these are of such a nature that a person ought to be able to note his transgressions of them very readily. It takes comparatively little spiritual knowledge and understanding to note the faults in thoughts, words, and deeds that are committed against one's neighbor. Jesus had noted at once that this young man

was fully satisfied with an external probity before men. People of his stamp must always be referred to the total keeping of the Law of God, when they live so securely in their self-righteousness. If this method works a proper knowledge of sin, then there will also be opportunity for the knowledge of Jesus as the Savior of sinners, and for faith in Him. (Kretzmann)

**10:20** *teacher – didaskale*: The young man no longer refers to Jesus as “Good Teacher,” which Jesus says is essentially confessing him as God. He does not confess nor even need a merciful God when touting his own works. The rich young man eagerly assumes the Law’s obligation upon himself, although unaware that the burden will kill him. Jesus will soon give him a taste of this burden by the accusing command in v 21. Thereby, Jesus exposes the death lurking within him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*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)

He is totally Pharisaical. "I myself have kept." NEB, NIV: "Since I was a boy." Beck: "Since I was a child." (Buls)

*ephulaxamēn*: The young man has a low, superficial, external view of the Law’s demands. In this limited sphere, he considers himself blameless just as Saul the Pharisee (Phil 3:6). This verb is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew *shamar*, the word used for the Israelites properly keeping the Law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

In this case, the man coolly stated that he had kept all these commandments from his youth. He was still so thoroughly bound in spiritual blindness that he supposed an outward abstaining from the deeds of wickedness and darkness constituted the fulfillment of the Law. Here was true pharisaic conceit. It is the same experience which believers will have in their dealings with the self-righteous hypocrites of this World. If they live an outwardly moral life, then they believe they have fulfilled God will, and think they will be acceptable on the last day. And they have never examined their heart to see the mass of filth and transgression to be found there. (Kretzmann)

*since my youth*. Probably a reference to the age of 13, when a Jewish boy assumed personal responsibility for obeying the commandments. (CSB)

*neotētos mou*, “my youth”: This expression likely refers to the age of *bar mitzvah*, approximately age thirteen, when he would have taken upon himself the obligation of keeping the Law (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991], 163). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**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)

Jesus did not speak harshly or out of anger, but compassionately. He sought to strip away the man’s self-deception about having kept the Law. (TLSB)

*ēgapēsen auton*: In love, Jesus desires to be more than just a source of sage advice. Rather than allowing the Law to be the end of the process (as the man wanted), he uses Law to prepare the way for the young man to see Jesus as Savior, rather than merely as Lawgiver. On his way to the cross, Jesus turns the table

and acts as a surgeon to cut and then to heal. Jesus wants to expose the man's delusion in order to grant him a Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

In spite of the young man's foolish answer, Jesus looked upon him earnestly, affectionately, He regarded him lovingly. He loved him, not only on account of his youth, his earnestness, and his evident sincerity, but because He wanted, if possible, to save his soul. The man was so utterly unconscious of his spiritual condition that only strong medicine would arouse him to a realization of his needs. He attacked him on his weakest side. (Kretzmann)

*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)

At this point Matthew 19:20 uses "he asked" with the question "What do I still lack?" Mark gives Jesus' answer: "One thing lacks you." (You lack one thing). The man's question plainly shows his honest dissatisfaction with himself.

Bengel states that "looked at him and loved him" denotes a hendiadys: "He lovingly beheld him." A good suggestion. (Buls)

Note the utter contrast between the words "all" in verse 20, and "one" in verse 21. The "all" was not enough. The "one" is the final test. In verse 18 Jesus practically tells the man that he does not know what "good" means. In verse 21 He tells him that he does not know what true love toward God and man is. The "treasure in heaven" is not eschatological, but present. It is a promise. And to follow Jesus means to trust Him for all needed good for soul and body. (Buls)

Bengel: This 'one thing' is a heart freed from the idolatry of creatures. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: This particular command is based on the universal requirement of unconditional self-denial and the surrender of all for Christ's sake . . . It is a moral standard Jesus presents in these words for all, not only for the few . . . The demand is spiritual . . . It is important that we cut loose from everything which serves to hinder our salvation.

Hendriksen: To the young man, supplying this lack was a matter of 'addition.' But to Jesus, taking care of this lack was a matter of 'substitution.' Look at Galatians 2:10-21; Philippians 3:7ff. (Buls)

Note that not only the young man, but also the disciples had something to learn. (Buls)

*hen:* The Greek word "one" comes first in the sentence to emphasize the one thing lacking in contrast to the many works that this young man claims to have done perfectly. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*Husterei:* From an external glance, this young man might appear to have everything. However, Jesus astounds him by stating the very opposite. The present tense of the verb *hustereō* indicates an ongoing deficiency in the man's life. Contrast this present tense with the aorist subjunctive of *poieō* in v 17, where the man apparently assumes that a temporary or single action will result in eternal life. St. Paul uses this verb *hustereō* to show how all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). The Law points us to what we cannot do and makes us despair in our own deeds. Jesus employs the Law to reveal what this particular young man cannot do. Although he humbled himself before Jesus with physical gestures, sacrificing his riches and showing deference to the poor are beyond his radar screen. Therefore, on his

journey to the cross, Jesus is about to give up everything for this man and for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*give to the poor – hosa echeis pōlēson kai dos [tois] ptōchois*, “Sell all that you have and give to the poor.” The young man had transformed money and its acquisition into his source of identity, security, and meaning in life. Yet he claims total obedience to the Law since youth. One might expect Jesus’ anger at such an audacious claim. Instead, he takes a different approach. Jesus does not specifically deny that the man kept the external letter of the Law. Rather, he requests a drastic demonstration of the spirit of the Law. In his previous statement (v 19), Jesus alluded to the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Fourth Commandments. He saves the Ninth and Tenth, on covetousness, for now to apply the scalpel of the Law in all its sharpness. Here Jesus does not command all Christians to sell all their possessions and give to the poor. Rather, Jesus individualizes the message. Christ applies the Law personally to this young man in his specific situation. In love, he radically alters the relationship. He applies the Law so that he can apply the Gospel. He acts as judge so that he can be Savior. Namely, Jesus gives more than the man expected. There is always more with Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*treasure in heaven.* † The gift of eternal life, or salvation. This treasure is not to be earned by self-denial or giving of one’s material goods. In giving away his wealth, the young man would have removed the obstacle that kept him from trusting in Jesus. (CSB)

Should He therefore demand, for the sake of the Kingdom, that we give up all our earthly possessions, yea, life itself, for His sake, and serve our neighbor in humility, there must be no hesitation on our part. (Kretzmann)

**10:22** *He went away sorrowful.* The tragic decision to turn away reflected a greater love for his possessions than for eternal life (cf. 4:19). (CSB)

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)

Beck: He looked gloomy and went away sad.(Buls)

Mark gives us his outward appearance and his inner reaction. Both are participles of attendant circumstance. "Because" is "You see," an explanation. (Buls)

*stugnasas*: The participle of *stugnazō* refers here to one becoming downcast. The verb is also used of the sky becoming gloomy or dark (Mt 16:3). This man feels downcast with grief and gloom, since the weight of the Law is too much for him. Christ suffered the gloomy weight of the Law for us on the cross. There he bore the Law’s full burden in darkness, since we cannot bear the full accusation of the Law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

The price was too high for the rich young man. He forgot to look at the prize – Jesus Christ, treasure in heaven, the Kingdom of God. Did he ever return? We don’t know. (PBC)