

21th Sunday after Pentecost October 14, 2018

20th Sunday after the Trinity Proper 23 (28)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

Lutheran

Living the ^ Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
- ✦ Through www.Facebook.com at “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”, “Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma”, or “Harold Weseloh”
- ✦ All links in this on-line copy are active and can be reached using Ctrl+Click

Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104

One thing you lack

Mark 10:17-22

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6twau663_s

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 694 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 399

“Thee will I love, my strength my tower”

Author, “Johann Scheffler,(Angelus Silesius), was born in 1624 at Breslau in Silesia. His father, Stanislas Scheffler, was a member of the Polish nobility, but had been forced to leave his fatherland on account of his adherence to Lutheranism, and had then settled in Breslau. The son was thus educated as a strict Lutheran...” After becoming a doctor, “ he returned to Silesia, and, on Nov. 3, 1649, was appointed private physician, at Oels, to Duke Sylvius Nimrod of Württemberg-Oels. The Duke was a staunch Lutheran, and his court preacher, Christoph Freitag, administered the ecclesiastical affairs of the district according to the strictest Lutheran churchly orthodoxy. Scheffler, who in Hollaud had become acquainted with the writings of Jakob Böhme, and had become a personal friend of Abraham von Frankenberg, the editor of Böhme's works, soon found that the spiritual atmosphere of Oels did not suit him. His own leanings at this time were distinctly to Mysticism and Separatism. He was at no pains to conceal his sentiments, and withdrew himself from public worship, from confession, and from the Holy Communion. When he wished to publish his poems, and submitted them for this purpose to Freitag, he was refused permission to print them on the ground of their mystical tendencies. He resigned his post in the end of 1652, and went to Breslau. Here he became acquainted with the Jesuits, who in that place were earnest students of the mystical works of Tauler (q.v.), and through them was introduced to the study of the mediaeval mystics of the Roman Catholic Church... Of Scheffler, as a Convert and as a Controversialist, not much need be said. He certainly became more Roman than the Romans; and in his more than 50 controversial tractates, shows little of the sweetness and repose for which some have thought that he left the Lutheran church. In his *Ecclesiologia...* he collected 39 of these treatises, of which e.g. No. 34 is entitled, "The Lutheran and Calvinistic Idol of the Understanding exhibited, laid bare, as well as the Likeness of the True God. In which also, at the same time, the attacks and objections of adversaries are repelled. 1 Cor. viii. 4, Idolum nihil est, an idol is nothing."

- https://hymnary.org/person/Angelus_Silesius
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1_IhlcB2d4 An organ prelude based on “Ich will dich lieben”, Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower from A Thousand Voices - 7 Hymn Tune Preludes (Organ), CPH
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03dTaR-PsT4> Sing along to TLH 399
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkJLHOyxtew> “Recorded during Evensong service at St-Barnabas Anglican Church, Ottawa, on 20 September 2009. The choir sings Gibbs' Thee Will I Love accompanied by Wesley Warren at the organ.”

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading from Amos or Job 23:1-9, 16-17 (Next week: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20,]; RCL, Isaiah 53:4-12 or Job 38:1-7, (34-41))

“Amos worked full-time for much of his life as “a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees” (Amos 1:1; 7:14) in the village of Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah.

One day God called this rancher and arborist to leave his vocation in order to become God's mouthpiece and prophet to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos came as an outsider with strong warnings of God's imminent judgment upon the king, the politically powerful, the wealthy and well-connected, and the religious establishment...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=405 **Dennis Olson**
Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ

Seek the LORD and Live

5 Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:

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^[a]
and cast down righteousness to the earth!

⁸ He who made the Pleiades and Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the morning
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea
and pours them out on the surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name;

⁹ who makes destruction flash forth against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

¹⁰ They hate him who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor him who speaks the truth.

¹¹ Therefore because you trample on^[b] 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.

- a. [Amos 5:7](#) Or to bitter fruit
- b. [Amos 5:11](#) Or you tax

“Anyone who has read the book of Amos, however, knows that Amos showed himself to be the fool on many occasions, consistently decrying the opulence of the elite at the expense of the poor. Amos is a hard book with tough words. Throughout the book we repeatedly read about the wrath of a disappointed deity who will ultimately lash out against the oppressive Israelite culture. We read recitations of crimes that the upper class has perpetrated upon the poor. Most of all, Amos laments the lack of justice in the land and the disrespect for the word of the LORD. Rarely in the book do we experience a chance for repentance, much less words that offer a chance for redemption.

The lectionary passage for this week, however, envelopes more indictments with a faint glimpse of the hope for repentance. The opportunity to repent is only possible when the guilty parties recognize the magnitude of their violations. The words from Amos are not words of false hope, but words of realistic hope that rely on the response of the hearer.

Establishing Justice in the Gate

The charges against the Israelites are quite clear. After the general metaphorical indictment against those who would turn justice into rot, tossing righteousness on the ground (verse 7), we hear the more specific crimes. One of the most relevant indictments for our own era appears in verse 10: "They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth."

The "gate" in ancient Israel was often seen as the place where judgment occurred or legal and economic transactions took place. This is the venue where Boaz negotiated for the right to redeem Elimelech's land and marry Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth. The gate is also where Absalom stole the hearts and minds of Israel's citizens from his father David by rendering judgment (incidentally, the Hebrew term *mishpat*, the same term used in Amos 5:7) and discerning disputes among the citizens (1 Samuel 15:1-6)..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1477 **David G. Garber Jr.** Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Ga.

Read Steed Davidson's commentary for a detailed approach to this reading as "Integrating life and liturgy".

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2609 **Steed Davidson**
Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Ill.

Psalm 90:12-17; RCL, Psalm 90:12-17, or Psalm 22:1-15 (Psalm 119:9-16; RCL, Psalm 91:9-16 or Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c)

This week's psalm selection is the closing section of one of the great lyrics of the Bible-- Psalm 90.

It is the only poem in the Psalter that is associated with Moses; the Hebrew in the superscription literally reads "a prayer to Moses, man of God," and likely does not refer to Moses as the author of the poem. Most likely the connection with Moses was made because of the wisdom-like theme of the psalm.

In the same way that one can tune into the last inning of a ballgame or drop in for the last movement of a symphony and still enjoy the climax of the performance, it is indeed right and salutary that the preacher or worship planner opt to stick with the lectionary and use only the closing verses of the psalm. Better, however, would be to include all seventeen verses of this poem.

Don't have time for those extra eleven verses? Here's an idea--skip one announcement so as to make time for the word of God..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=406 **Rolf Jacobson**
Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Book Four

From Everlasting to Everlasting

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

- ¹² So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.
- ¹³ Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!
- ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
and for as many years as we have seen evil.
- ¹⁶ Let your work be shown to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
- ¹⁷ Let the favor^[a] of the Lord our God be upon us,

and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!

- a. [Psalm 90:17](#) Or *beauty*

“If, on occasion, the Revised Common Lectionary may be said to do the interpreter no favors in its delineation of the boundaries of a text, the reading before us from Psalm 90 surely presents such an occasion.

Reading only from verse 12 onward, it is difficult to avoid the impression of a congregation seeking to wheedle as many good things as they can think of out of God, in an almost childlike, “praying for candy” tone. Were it not for the anomalous “So” that begins verse 12 and the hints of some darker reality lurking in the background found in the “Turn, O Lord! How long?” of verse 13 and the “as many days as you have afflicted us” of verse 15, the interpreter might be led to think this a fairly uninteresting piece.

The conjunctive force of that “So” turns the reader’s attention to the preceding verses of the psalm by framing the petitions of the selected reading as the result of what has gone before. When the entire psalm is considered, the hints of darkness acquire substance, and the petitions may be seen and understood more fully in context. Thus, the interpreter should, at minimum, attend to the whole psalm, if it is not possible to have the entirety read in worship. Taken as a whole, Psalm 90 presents a sequence of three observations or contentions, followed by a set of petitions deriving from them. The three observations, in brief, are as follows: God is eternal, and God’s reign extends beyond even the lifespan of the creation itself. God’s role as the “dwelling place” of God’s people is similarly without end (verses 1-2).

Human lives, by contrast, and even the longest spans of time that human beings can contemplate (“a thousand years”) are, by comparison, ephemeral. All return to the dust within what doesn’t even amount to the blink of an eye in God’s frame of reference (verses 3-6).

Even the oh-so-brief span of a human life, seventy or perhaps eighty years at best, is beset with constant toil and suffering, and this toil and suffering are the expression of God’s judgment and wrath against human sin. The best that can be hoped for is that knowledge of the brevity of human existence will somehow grant wisdom (verses 7-12)...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2647 Matthew Stith Pastor, Round Hill Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth, Pa.

Hebrews 3:12-19; RCL, Hebrews 4:12-16 (*Hebrews 4:1-13 (14-16)*); RCL, Hebrews 5:1-10)

“...The text naturally divides itself into an exhortation: **Take heed, brethren** a warrants: **“lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief;”** and a description of the danger which would follow from a neglect of this warning: **“in departing from the living God.”** Lay up those three things in your memory and heart, and may God cause them to work there for the effectual blessing of your spiritual life...”

- <https://www.preceptaustin.org/hebrews-312-13> Charles Spurgeon

A Rest for the People of God

¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Cited from Ps. 95:7-11

¹⁶For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

“...The danger of unbelief: V.15 - 17...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). 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.

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... 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..."

➤ <http://www.kretzmannproject.org/> Paul Kretzmann

Challenge yourself to understand Hebrews from a Lutheran viewpoint by reading the following two commentaries. The first is from Steven J. Cole, a pastor of Flagstaff Christian fellowship. He presents several views and then concludes that main view of Reformed Theology is the truth.

One of the most controversial issues among Christians is, "Can a believer lose his salvation?"...Our hearts want to say "yes," but there are scary verses, such as several in our text, that make us hesitate.

Among evangelicals, there are three main camps. Consistent Arminians would say that this person was saved, but he lost his salvation. These folks view salvation primarily as a human decision. If your decision to believe gets you in, your decision to deny the faith puts you out. I dismiss this view as indefensible in light of many Scriptures that promise security to God's children (such as [Rom. 8:1](#) & 29-36).

Among those who hold that believers cannot lose their salvation, there are two main camps. Some argue that perseverance is not necessary for salvation to be secure. Their motto is, "Once saved, always saved." They argue that to make salvation require perseverance makes it depend on works. And they argue that if final salvation depends on perseverance, then assurance of salvation is impossible. What if I fall away in the future? And so they say that all that matters is that a person once believed in Christ.

This view shares with the Arminian view the idea that faith is a human decision. It is not a gift that God imparts to those He regenerates. Rather, faith is like a lever that we pull. Once we pull it, all the benefits of salvation come pouring out, and we can't stop the process. We can walk away and say that we don't want those benefits, but they still belong to us. How we live after we believe has nothing to do with our eternal destiny or security.

The other main view is that of Reformed theology, that saving faith is God's gift, imparted to us when He saves us. Salvation originates with God and depends totally on His purpose and power. Since He promises to complete what He began to the praise of His glorious grace, all of God's elect will persevere in faith unto eternal life. This view, which I believe is the truth, holds that there is such a thing as false faith. It is possible for some who profess faith in Christ later to fall away from the faith, thus demonstrating that their faith was not genuine. But saving faith, by its very nature, perseveres. Continuance in the faith is the evidence that our faith is from God, and not from man.

This is not to say that persevering faith is effortless or automatic. God ordains the means as well as the ends. God's sovereignty in salvation never negates human responsibility. God elects all whom He saves, but the elect are responsible to repent of their sins and believe

in Jesus Christ. Although God promises that His elect will all finally be saved, we are exhorted to persevere in faith. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are not at odds! Our text is a strong exhortation to persevere in the faith..."

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-11-persevering-faith-hebrews-312-19> Steven J. Cole

The second is from Father William Most of the Catholic Church. His article includes statements like: "...The error of Martin Luther is clearly nonsense, it supposes that after all these warnings of Hebrews, after the warning that it is virtually impossible to be restored if one once having received grace should fall away -- it is impossible to suppose that once Jesus has earned salvation, we may now sin as much as we want so that, "no sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day"..."

- <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/most/getwork.cfm?worknum=85>

Mark 10:17-22; RCL, Mark 10:17-31 (Mark 10:23-31; RCL, Mark 10:35-45)

"For the full narrative effect of the account, we need to set aside what we already know about this story and attend to the sequence of details as they are related to us readers.

The story begins with a notice that Jesus is on the "way." Both John the Baptizer's preparing "the way of the Lord" (1:2f.) and the designation for early Christians as those belonging to "the Way" (Acts 9:2) point to the use of this term as an indication that discipleship is under consideration.

At this point in Mark, we are only told that someone runs up to Jesus and kneels before him. We do not know anything else about him, though the Greek indicates he is a male. Because he kneels, we can surmise that he is genuinely respectful to Jesus, and his address to Jesus as "good teacher" is similarly sincere. His question -- "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" -- is not a test for Jesus. He truly wants to know Jesus' answer, and we as readers should probably be just as interested..."(continued after the reading)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 10th Chapter"

The Rich Young Man

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.

"This is the Gospel of the Lord" "Praise to You, O Christ"

“...But Jesus surprises the man (and the readers) by responding with, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” (10:18) We hold that thought for only a moment, before Jesus immediately launches into a recitation of the commandments. Note, however, that these commands are all from the “second table” related to human interactions. Omitted are the commands related to human-divine interaction.

The man now replies by simply calling Jesus “Teacher,” and it’s understandable for a Jew to do so given Jesus’ earlier comment on the goodness of God alone. But do the readers regard him less highly for not calling Jesus good? We need to ponder whether the man was right the first time. If we believe Jesus to be a “good teacher,” then it becomes an implicit faith statement about the divine identity of Jesus. This is a subtle Markan narrative technique used to help us readers come to an accurate confession.

The man continues by claiming he had observed all those commands from his youth. Is he lying? Self-deceived? Or does he believe he is really telling the truth? Jesus does not challenge his claim, so I think we need to accept it as true, probably in the same way that Paul claimed to be blameless with respect to righteousness under the law. (Philippians 3:6) Again we must pause to evaluate what we think of the man. The narrative also pauses for a moment by noting that Jesus gazed at him ... and then reports that Jesus loved him! If the reader wants to be like Jesus, then the reader needs to love him too, but has the man’s initial question been answered?

Jesus says he lacks one thing. (Is it his failure to keep that first table of the commandments related to God?) He is to sell what he has and give it to the poor in order to obtain treasure in heaven. Further, he is to “follow” Jesus, a typical characterization of discipleship in Mark. (Is this what a proper relationship with God looks like?)

What will this man whom Jesus loves do? The text says he became dismayed, and he went away (the opposite of following) grieving. Doubtless Jesus commanded a hard thing, but why this overly sad reaction? Only now are we told, “For he was having many possessions.” (If we had been told this detail from the outset, would it have skewed our perceptions of him?)...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2640 **Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman** Glatfelter Professor of Biblical Studies, United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, Penn.



Agnus Day appears with the permission of <https://www.agnusday.org/>