

Introductory

This reading has parallels in Mark (8:31–9:1) and Luke (9:22-27). Neither those nor today's text are appointed to be read in the TLH one-year lectionary. In LW, the reading for Pentecost 17A is Mark 8:27-35, which includes last week's "Who do men say that I am?" pericope and more. The reading for Pentecost 5A in LW is Luke 9:18-24.

That reading includes essentially the same information as Mark, but it is shortened and it significantly leaves out the part where Jesus calls Peter "Satan," a Hebrew word. LSB moves the Mark text to the Lenten Season, where 8:27-38 is the text appointed to be read on Lent 2B. The Luke text is not appointed to be read in the LSB three-year lectionary.

In Matthew, the things described here happen after the things described in last week's text; Peter's Great Confession that Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus commends him for that. If Peter showed great insight about the identity of Jesus as the Christ in his Great Confession, he here shows great ignorance about what it *means* for Jesus to be the Christ.

When he elevates himself to the place of one who would be equal to Jesus, boldly presuming to rebuke Jesus, he himself finds himself rebuked with words that must have burned in his ears for quite some time, "Get thee behind me, Satan," which means "enemy," for in rebuking Jesus, he is taking the side of Satan, who is against Jesus.

Three times in Matthew Jesus tells the disciples that He is going to Jerusalem and that when He gets there, He will suffer much and ultimately be killed. This first time Jesus talks about that trip to Jerusalem they, or at least Peter, do not take it well. Then the Transfiguration, the healing of the boy, and then for the second time (17:22-23).

That's the second time Jesus tells them that He is going to Jerusalem, and Matthew tells us that they were "greatly distressed." But at least nobody tried to rebuke Him this time, and as a result nobody got called "Satan." Then stuff happens and then for the third time Jesus talks of Jerusalem (20:17-19) and Matthew does not record their response.

Matthew tells us their response the first two times, but He does not tell us of any response the third time. Was there no response? Maybe they had gotten used to the idea of Jesus' suffering and death. Maybe they understood that Jerusalem was "necessary." Maybe they noticed that each time Jesus talked about His death, He also talked about rising.

The words “Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins” easily rolls off the LCMS tongue. In preaching this text, we focus on the suffering that is part and parcel of the life of Jesus, a suffering that ends for Him in a slow, painful, torturous death on a cross. I find myself becoming, as time goes on, more graphic about what exactly is crucifixion.

Once, I began a sermon by articulating a short history of capital punishment. I suspect that some thought such talk to be inappropriate on some level, and I could tell that it made some of the people uncomfortable, as well they should be when hearing talk about hanging, beheading, burning, and all the other ways that we execute people.

But I did not talk about drawing and quartering. I will make the point that, as we move along in execution technology, we try to make it more humane and less painful. The Romans were not like us in that regard. Crucifixion was intended to be painful, and it was. Then I perhaps briefly describe death by crucifixion, adding details as time goes by.

A key concept here is the idea of the *necessity* of the trip to Jerusalem, as well as what happened after Jesus got there. Each of the three times that Jesus tells them where this thing is headed, He talks about it as being necessary. Explain to your hearers exactly why it is “necessary” for this to take place, and what if it had not taken place.

When talking of the necessity of the trip to Jerusalem, speak in terms like “atonement” and “payment” and “sacrifice” and all the other theological terminology that helps to get across the basic point that “Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins.” When using those terms, explain them again and maybe use them in a sentence or give an example.

We may think of “atonement” as a lofty theological concept unable to be understood by the person in the pew. But if you said to most Americans that a certain person had to “atone” for his sins or mistakes, they would likely know what you mean. And if the word is so obscure, then why are there both a novel and a movie with the title *Atonement*?

That word, and other words we have been told not to use because people don’t know what the word means, is *not* as unfamiliar to Americans as we may think. Use it, and if you need to explain what it means, then explain what it means. It’s what a good teacher does, and you should always be building the theological vocabulary of your people.

People are extremely familiar with the word “payment.” They do it every day in the grocery store and whenever the bills come in, and they certainly understand the concept of “sacrifice.” Use those kinds of words to point out that it was Jesus who atoned for our sins, that it was Jesus who paid the high price – His Life - for our sins, et al.

Textual Notes

21. Having reached Caesarea Philippi, the farthest that His travels would take Him from Jerusalem, theological center of Judaism, Jesus now informs the disciples that they are

headed to Jerusalem. Normally probably that would have been to them welcome news, but not this time, at least not when Jesus told them what was awaiting Him upon arrival.

Peter's Confession, the Keys, keep it on the QT, then “Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δεικνύειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα – from that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that it is necessary for Him to go away to Jerusalem.” The verb “to show” occurs thirty-three times in the NT, and it involves seeing with the eye.

The only occurrence not involving physical sight is when it means “to show by word, to teach,” (biblehub) and the only occurrence of that meaning is here and in the parallel in Mark, and that sounds odd. It sounds odd that a word involves physical seeing over thirty times in the NT, except for this one place where it does not. Maybe it does.

The verb is in the present active infinitive form, connecting the action to the actor. In this case, it means that His showing them what lies ahead is very much a part of the identity of Jesus; He is always teachings, often using things that can and have been seen with the eye. Up to this point, the disciples have seen many things with their eyes.

They had seen the miracles of Jesus and how people responded, and they had seen how His preaching had been responded to. They had also seen the response of the Religious Establishment to Him, and how Nazareth sought to kill Him. It is to things like these things that Jesus appeals to “show” them of the necessity of the final trip to Jerusalem.

Seeing what they have seen, they must know that there's only one way for this thing to end. It must end with the victory of Resurrection, but before that can take place there must be death, and before death the usual infliction of suffering. So, the basic meaning of “δεῖ” in the NT; a bad or negative thing happens first, then a good or positive thing.

When they get to Jerusalem, “ἀπελθεῖν καὶ πολλὰ παθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι – to go away and suffer many things from the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and to be killed, and on the third day to be raised.” His being killed and raised are both passive verbs.

He did not kill Himself, nor did He raise Himself from the dead. The earlier verb “to show” is a present infinitive, and the rest are aorist infinitives; focus on the act, to “suffer, be killed, be raised.” This evil, Jesus says, will take place at the hands of the Chief Priests, Elders, and Scribes of Judah, roughly the three groups making up the Sanhedrin.

The Internet has a lot of information about these three groups of religious leaders. An individual in the time of Jesus may have been a part of two or even all three groups at the same time. For most of human history, class has been distinctive, and the upper classes were educated, owned land, had money and other assets, and ruled the lower classes.

When I talk about these people, I will refer to them as “the religious leaders,” or “clergy” or “the theologians” or even “the pastors.” I might use all of those words to describe

those men. It brings their identity more clearly into focus and makes their acts against Jesus even more despicable; they should have known better and we should know better.

22. Lately, the disciples have shown a disturbing tendency to butt in, take charge, and tell Jesus what to do. At the Feeding of the 5,000 they told Him to tell the crowds to go into town and buy food. He told them to feed them. When He interacted with the Canaanite woman, they told Him to send her away. He talks to her and commends her faith.

Peter took that arrogance to the next level; “καὶ προσλαβόμενος αὐτὸν ὁ Πέτρος ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ - and taking Him aside, Peter began to rebuke Him.” First Peter takes Jesus aside, physically laying hold on Him, separating Him from the rest, like you do for a friend when his zipper is down, or when he has a piece of spinach stuck in his teeth.

Or when that friend is talking crazy talk, like the kind of talk that Jesus is talking now. The verb “ἐπιτιμάω – rebuke” is an action often and appropriately attributed to Jesus, who is God, and who rebukes things like the wind and other people. Here the term is attributed to Peter, who is not God, and who of course has no business rebuking Jesus.

He knows what awaits them in Jerusalem, so let’s just not go there. He pulls Jesus aside, then he talks to Him, “λέγων Ἰλεῶς σοι, Κύριε· οὐ μὴ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο – saying, Lord have mercy, this will not be to you.” Peter calls Jesus “Lord,” then uses two negatives, οὐ and μή, to declare that what Jesus says is going to happen is not going to happen.

You recall that unlike in the English language, where the second negative cancels out the first negative, in the Greek language the second negative intensifies the first. The verb “λέγων – saying” is a present active participle, indicating that once this rebuke of Peter started, it went on for some time. He’s trying to talk Jesus out of it.

Several times Jesus, finding Himself in the fact of danger, Jesus “withdrew.” So, what’s different now? What’s different is that then His time had not yet come and now His time has come. The first word of Peter’s rebuke is “ἰλεως,” a word that occurs two times in the NT, here and in Hebrews 8:12, and has connotations of “mercy,” as in asking for it.

It seems to me as if we might be dealing with an idiom the meaning of which may be akin to our “Lord, have mercy.” When do you say that? Reinicker renders the word as used by Peter, “may God in His mercy spare you this.” That rendering captures the jist of the word, and his meaning in using it is made clear in the rest of his words.

23. Jesus then “ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς εἶπεν τῷ Πέτρῳ Ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ - turning, said to Peter, ‘go behind me, Satan.’” As for Jesus “turning,” Robertson says, “having turned around,” and he takes it to mean that Jesus turned “away from Peter in revulsion, and towards the other disciples.” He then quotes Mark 8:33 in support of that assertion.

The Mark text *does* have Jesus beholding the disciples, so it seems that either Jesus was facing Peter, then turned away from him, or He was facing the others – while Peter was

talking – and now faces Peter. The assumption would be that Jesus has to be facing Peter to be talking to Peter, but you can talk to somebody without looking at him.

I'm not sure if "revulsion" is the right word, but the body language of Jesus vis a vis Peter makes it clear that Peter is not right now His favorite. He's about to call him what He calls him. Perhaps the understated "disappointment" sounds like Jesus, and by turning His back on him, He's showing Peter where he belongs; behind Him.

Peter does not belong face to face with Jesus, as an equal, but behind Him as a subordinate and verbalizing the command to him to get behind Him. The uppity Peter is thus firstly reminded of his place in the group, to the rear and not to the front, that Jesus had commanded him to "follow Me," not to "lead Me," and Christians forget that.

He is then made aware of the meaning of his words of rebuke, the words by which he seeks to convince Jesus not to go to Jerusalem. Peter is called "Satan," which means "enemy," by Jesus because at this point, trying to keep Jesus from doing His necessary work, Peter is functioning not as a friend or even a follower of Jesus, but as an enemy.

This is not the first mention of "Satan" in the book of Matthew. In the fourth chapter he records three separate times when Satan tempted Jesus. The third temptation strikes us as particularly odd, because everything being offered by Satan, "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," in exchange for Jesus' worship, already belong to Jesus.

The offer there from Satan to Jesus is that Jesus can have those things, but *without having to go through* all the hassle of suffering, death, and resurrection, the same thing that Peter is here suggesting, only without the Satan-worship. That third temptation, and it must have been a powerful one, is the one that Jesus has in mind when He calls Peter, "Satan."

In his efforts to dissuade Jesus from the necessary work of the cross, he has unwittingly joined forces with the enemy of Jesus, who wants the same thing, and who is, we note, allied also with "άνθρώπων – men" (below). These days, those who would dissuade us from preaching The Cross and Christ Crucified are to be likewise viewed as the enemy.

After He calls him "Satan," Jesus tells Peter "σκάνδαλον εἶ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων – you are a stumbling block to me, because your thoughts are not the things of God, but the things of man." The word "stumbling block" is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians, where "the cross" is called "a stumbling block" to the Jews.

Peter may be the first Jew to be put off by the idea of Messiah as Crucified, or at least to express it, but he was not the last. The verbal form of the word, "σκάνδαλίζω," is used later by Jesus (ch 18), when He assigns grave consequences to anybody who causes harm to "one of these little ones who believe in me;" whoever causes one of them to lose faith.

Having been the recipient of that theological 2 X 4 upside the head, delivered by Jesus the Christ, you wonder how Peter responded. The next time we see Peter in Matthew, six

days later, he is up on the Mount of Transfiguration, where he is not telling Jesus what to do but is saying to Jesus, “if you want...(17:4).” Message delivered; message received.

24. Now Jesus talks to His disciples about what it will mean to follow Him. He begins with the conditional “εἰ – if,” and the implied “then.” He says that “if” anybody wants to follow “behind me,” the same wording spoken earlier to Peter, then that person must do these three things: deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him, all Imperatives.

The verb “ἀπαρνέομαι – deny” is an imperative command to publicly disown or repudiate *self* in favor of Jesus. It’s the same word used in Matthew (26), where Peter is told by Jesus that he would disown or repudiate *Him* (v. 34), and then where Peter does it (v. 75), denying even any knowledge of Jesus. That denial is a direct violation of this command.

I still bang the drum about the need for pastors to use figures of speech in their sermons. Aristotle advocated the same thing 2,500 years ago, and it works. You have heard it said that God, who created us, uses figures of speech all the time to communicate with us, and it works. The last half of this reading is chock-full of figures of speech.

An Idiom is a figure of speech that consists of a phrase or saying that is understood by people in a particular culture, but that makes no sense to people of another culture. Americans might say, “You need to get it through your head...while the Brits might express the same thought by saying “You need to get your head around...”

If an American says, “He has a chip on his shoulder” a man from China might look to the left and right of the guy’s neck and wonder “where is this chip?” When the man from India reads that GM “fired” workers, he cringes. There are idioms in the Bible, figures of speech understood by that people in that time and that place, but not so much by us.

When Jesus says to Judas that Satan will “sift you as wheat,” only a few of us get it, and the idiom “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle...” has inspired pages of bible scholarship. See www.idiomsite.com for more idiom info. The Phrase “take up your cross and follow me” is an idiom that was first coined here by Jesus.

It is an idiom that has traveled through space and time and made it into the vernacular of western Christians, who know it well, although the original meaning has morphed. To most Americans these days, to “take up one’s cross” is to suffer unjustly for the greater good. It may but probably does not have to be suffering as because you’re a Christian.

When it does, then for the serious Christian, the phrase means to suffer unjustly for the sake of Christ, as Christ suffered unjustly for ours. If it really literally means that we ought to pick up a cross and carry it around, then why aren’t you? Rhetorical question, and every now and then – around Lent – you can see a person actually doing just that.

25. And then there’s the oxymoron. An oxymoron is a figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined: “Freezer Burn, Sweet Sorrow, Jumbo

Shrimp” and “Civil War” are just a few of the well-known common oxymorons. I think people use oxymorons all the time, but don’t think much about them.

The oxymoron can also be in the form of a sentence. “The silence was deafening” would be an example. From the Bible: “Those who humble themselves will be exalted, Those who lose their lives will find them, Those who are poor are rich. Those who are weak are strong” et al. www.oxymoron.info, www.oxymoronlist.com for more.

Jesus’ saying here, “ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι, ἀπολέσει αὐτήν – whoever would save his life will lose it,” and “ὃς δ’ ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ, εὕρήσει αὐτήν – whoever loses his life for my sake will find it,” is an oxymoron. To follow Jesus is to go all in, and to not follow Him is to not. To be a Christian is to not sit on the fence.

One of the reasons why God, Aristotle, and I use figures of speech is that figures often create pathos in the hearer, and hearers want to have pathos created in them, and they listen better when that happens. It’s one of the appeals of music, poetry and other types of good literature, and it often separates memorable lines from the forgettable ones.

Do you remember when Mellencamp sang about how “it hurts so good?” That’s an oxymoron, and it’s memorable. If Mellencamp had said, “loving you hurts, but it’s still good,” which is what “hurts so good” means, but nobody would remember it. How much of last week’s sermon was memorable? Was there a line that moved the hearer to feel?

26. Appealing now to our logos as well, to our ability to think, engaging our minds, Jesus uses an argument from the lesser to the greater, put in the form of a rhetorical question. He speaks of one who gains the *lesser* thing – which is the whole world, but in the process loses the *greater* thing – which is his eternal soul. That would be stupid.

He follows that up with another rhetorical question, the answer to which is obvious, “what shall a man give in return for his life?” These verses ring with the tone of one who knows of which He speaks, who has experienced the temptations connected to those things, and who therefore brings a certain degree of ethos, or credibility to the table.

I’m talking about his first encounter with Satan in Matthew 4, and his more recent encounter with him in v. 23 of this chapter, where the temptation to do the expedient competed with the inclination to do the right. The expedient may look good in the short term and bring immediate gratification, but in the end, the right is always better.

27. He speaks of the future, but does not use the future tense, saying that “the Son of Man is about,” a verb that connotes both immanency and certainty. And what is He “about to” do? He is “about to come,” the present middle infinitive of the common verb “έρχομαι.” Such coming will be with “the glory of His Father and with His angels,” on the last day.

That language is of the long term, using apocalyptic language to talk about the end times and the final judgment, and when that judgment comes, “τότε ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν

πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ – then He will give to each according to his good deeds.” That idea comes up later (25:31ff.) when He talks about final judgment, separating sheep and goats.

Not to worry. Jesus is not teaching works righteousness here or there. The word there, which the translators render variously “reward, judge, pay back, render,” means nothing of the sort, at least and especially in this context. The word here is not μίσθος, the common word for wages or a reward for something that has been done.

The word is the not-common word ἀποδώσει, the word for paying back or repaying something *at a later time*. Jesus has just told them that He wants their lives, and He now tells them that it’s only temporary, that He’s good for it, that they will get their lives back at some time in the future. A word study of “ἀποδώσει,” may be useful, even edifying.

28. Jesus finishes with words that are passionate and personal, telling them that some of them will still be alive to see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. Christians generally and correctly understand the Resurrection to be this coming of the Kingdom, and in fact most of these men were there and present for that event.

Judas was the only one of the twelve who did not live to see that great event, and Thomas had to wait a week longer than the rest to see it in the flesh, but the rest did, in fact, live to see the Kingdom. At their martyrdoms – and all were martyred, save John the Apostle – they each saw it again and for eternity. And Jesus is there as well; the gang’s all here!

Law/Gospel

Death/Resurrection and Life – The death of Jesus was gruesome and tragic. His resurrection was beautiful and epic. In Baptism, we have been joined to His death and resurrection, a preview of the end of our time on this planet.

Man in Charge/Jesus in Charge – The disciples wanted to send away the multitudes, but Jesus fed them. Peter walked on water until he remembered that he was Peter, and he began to sink, and Jesus saved Him. The disciples wanted to send away the Canaanite woman. Jesus kept her around, commended her for her faith, and cast the demon out of her daughter. Peter wanted to tell Jesus how it is, but Jesus ends up telling Peter how it is. Things are better when Jesus is in charge of things.

Suffering/Glory – There was much suffering for Jesus, who is now in glory. There is much suffering on this earth, some of it because we are Christians, and we will one day join Jesus in His glory for eternity.

Sermon Titles

Peter Rebukes Jesus. Stay Tuned.

The Rock is Satan

Rock, Satan, Stumbling Block

Hymns

If Your Beloved Son, O God – LSB 568

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less – LSB 575

Crown Him with Many Crowns – LSB 525

Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus – LSB 531

Beautiful Savior – LSB 537

O Jesus, King Most Wonderful – LSB 554

Drawn to the Cross, Which Thou Hast Blessed – LSB 560

Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness – LSB 563

Anything from the *Redeemer*, *Justification*, or *Church Militant* sections

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Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Matthew)*.
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House,
1993

GBS – Jeffrey Gibbs, *Concordia Commentary, Matthew*, CPH, 2006

GND – Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, Eerdmans, 1982

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

SCR – David Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church*, CPH, 2004

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html