

## 18th Sunday after Pentecost      September 23, 2018

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Trinity      Proper 20 (25)

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  
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<http://podcast.ccemmett.org/e/becoming-the-least-mark-930-37/>

#### Hymn of the Day

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 851 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 442**

“Lord of glory, You have bought us “

“One of the most loved Welsh tunes, HYFRYDOL was composed by Rowland Hugh Prichard (b. Graienyn, near Bala, Merionetshire, Wales, 1811; d. Holywell, Flintshire, Wales, 1887) in 1830 when he was only nineteen. It was published with about forty of his other tunes in his children's hymnal *Cyfaill y Cantorion (The Singers' Friend)* in 1844. Prichard (sometimes spelled Pritchard) was a textile worker and an amateur musician. He had a good singing voice.... A simple bar form (AAB) tune with the narrow range of a sixth, HYFRYDOL builds to a stunning climax by sequential use of melodic motives. Sing in unison or harmony, and observe one pulse per measure. --*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, 1987”

- [https://hymnary.org/tune/hyfyrdol\\_prichard](https://hymnary.org/tune/hyfyrdol_prichard)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIYZtf8uqvI> Koine (This group was also used last week)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WepNEvKQQH0> Played on a 4 manual organ with registration changes on each verse. Bryan Sletten, Oct 16, 2009, Recording taken during my practice session.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceZA1gCog7o> “From the collection Piano Stylings, Set 1: Hymns for the Church Year Eight piano arrangements by Valerie A. Floeter for use year round. These settings include delightful and clever play with the hymn melodies, while pianists will appreciate their ease and simplicity. They are very accessible for most church musicians, but also motivating for students at the intermediate or early advanced level.” <http://www.cph.org/p-28102-piano-styl...>

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.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Jeremiah 11:18-20; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Wisdom of Solomon 1:16 - 2:1, 12-22 (Next week: Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29 RCL, the same reading from Numbers or Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22)**

*“The book of Jeremiah is filled with tears.*

*The devastating events relating to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE are the fundamental backdrop of this weeping and mourning...*

*These laments of Jeremiah reveal that the prophet is stuck between a rock and a hard place. Jeremiah lives in a pressure cooker. On the one hand, he has been called to speak the word of God, a strong word of indictment and an even harsher word of judgment. But he is never comfortable in doing so. He is despondent and despairing over the harsh message he is called to bring -- even though it comes from God...*

*At the same time, Jeremiah is confronted with the opposition of the people at every turn. However much the word he speaks is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces (Jeremiah*

23:29), that word could be resisted and usually was. They not only resist the word of God, they resist the one who speaks that word..."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1354](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1354) Terence E. Fretheim Elva B. Lovell Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD made it known to me and I knew;  
then you showed me their deeds.

<sup>19</sup>But I was like a gentle lamb  
led to the slaughter.

I did not know it was against me  
they devised schemes, saying,  
"Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,  
let us cut him off from the land of the living,  
that his name be remembered no more."

<sup>20</sup>But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,  
who tests the heart and the mind,  
let me see your vengeance upon them,  
for to you have I committed my cause.

"...Jeremiah proclaimed a message with implications for all of Judah and for everyone in Jerusalem. Active during the last part of the seventh and early part of the sixth century BCE, he was witness to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. He proclaimed the coming Babylonian invasion of Judah as God's judgment and encouraged the people to submit to it. He paid a high price for such preaching.

We need to read all of Jeremiah 11 to experience the full power of the assigned reading. The Lord tells Jeremiah to preach to the people of Judah and Jerusalem about the covenant that had been in force for six centuries. The people had repeatedly proven unfaithful throughout Israel's history. Now, continuing unfaithfulness to the covenant meant that judgment was coming.

The lectionary text focuses on threats Jeremiah is receiving because of his proclamation of God's impending judgment against Judah and Jerusalem. The matter the prophet addresses is thus very personal. He is under attack to the point that his very life is at risk. We will benefit in our reading, though, from remembering that the final shaping of the book of Jeremiah took place during the Babylonian exile, so the book offers a message for God's people as well as for God's prophet...

### **Revelation (verse 18)**

Taken in the context of Jeremiah 11, this sentence at first seems to be a continuation of what God has been saying to Jeremiah throughout the chapter. The people's rebellion against God has gotten so bad and the judgment has become so inevitable, the Lord has even barred Jeremiah from interceding on the people's behalf (Jeremiah 11:14)...

So at first glance, when Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 11:18, "It was the Lord who made it known to me, and I knew; then you showed me their evil deeds," it seems that "evil deeds" refers to the rebellion that God has addressed throughout the chapter to this point.

**Realization** (verse 19)

It turns out, though, that some of the people's evil deeds are directed at Jeremiah personally. This news takes the prophet by surprise...

The truly shocking news that the Lord reveals to Jeremiah is that those out to get him are residents of his hometown of Anathoth (Jeremiah 11:21-23). Jesus was hardly the first prophet to find no honor in his hometown (Mark 6:4). Still, it is particularly painful to learn that those who have known you the longest are your harshest critics and most committed opponents.

**Resolution** (verse 20)

Jeremiah 11:18-20 contains one of Jeremiah's many laments. We will profit from reading the others and from reading some of the laments in the Psalms. Interestingly, Leslie Allen points out that the text has elements of a psalm of thanksgiving;<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah is grateful that God has let him know of the threat against him. But what God has notified him of is cause for lament...

This closing verse of our passage is typical of laments. Jeremiah has "committed [his] cause" to the Lord, and he asks God to bring justice to those who want to destroy him. It is important to note a couple of things. First, Jeremiah leaves judgment in God's hands and doesn't try to execute it himself.<sup>2</sup> Second, keeping in mind the canonical shaping of the book of Jeremiah, this becomes a prayer of God's people, who trust that God is working God's purposes out and will do justice. We might keep in mind also that Jeremiah was certain he was in the right, and history has revealed that to be the case. We should take care in making such assumptions. But we can trust God to do true justice in the long run."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3783](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3783) [Michael L. Ruffin](#) Editor of Connections, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Macon, GA. *Connections* is the Revised Common Lectionary-based adult Bible Study Curriculum published by NextSunday Resources.

**Psalm 54; RCL, Psalm 54 or Psalm 1 (Psalm 104:27-35; RCL, Psalm 19:7-14 or Psalm 124)**

*"Perhaps you've heard the old saw, "Announcing your plans is a good way to hear God laugh" (or something like that).*

*If making plans of our own (presumably in the face of God's plans for us) is laughable, how about issuing commands to God, telling God the Divine's own business in no uncertain terms? Who would dare to give God orders? Yet this is, in a sense, exactly what Psalm 54 does..." (continued after the reading)*

**The Lord Upholds My Life**

*To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil<sup>al</sup> of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "Is not David hiding among us?"*

*“The poet’s original circumstances. If you consulted the commentaries, you know that this is one of a small number of psalms whose heading relates the prayer to circumstances in David’s life, in this case, 1 Samuel 23:19...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2533](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2533) [James K. Mead](#)  
Associate Professor of Religion, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

54 O God, save me by your name,  
and vindicate me by your might.

<sup>2</sup> O God, hear my prayer;  
give ear to the words of my mouth.

<sup>3</sup> For strangers<sup>[b]</sup> have risen against me;  
ruthless men seek my life;  
they do not set God before themselves. **Selah**

<sup>4</sup> Behold, God is my helper;  
the Lord is the upholder of my life.

<sup>5</sup> He will return the evil to my enemies;  
in your faithfulness put an end to them.

<sup>6</sup> With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;  
I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good.

<sup>7</sup> For he has delivered me from every trouble,  
and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

- a. [Psalm 54:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term
- b. [Psalm 54:3](#) Some Hebrew manuscripts and Targum *insolent men* (compare [Psalm 86:14](#))

“Our psalm begins with a four-fold plea: “save me...hear [me]...give ear [to me].” Each of these pleas -- actually imperative verbs -- and a fourth “vindicate me” (which in terms of tense is imperfect but in context clearly works like an imperative) quite literally command God’s attention, response, and action. These imperative clauses that form the introduction to the psalm demand God’s attention. And while some Hebrew language grammarians might call this particular use of the imperative a “jussive,” that is really just a delicate way of labeling the act of giving orders to someone who out-ranks you.

But enough grammar. Why is God’s attention and action commanded? Because the enemies of the psalmist, the insolent and the ruthless, have risen against him to tear him apart with their words.

At issue here in Psalm 54 is speech: speech directed to God in response to the vile slander of human beings. Notice the tension that is present in regards to the hearing of speech in the psalm. God is commanded to “give ear,” to listen, to pay attention to the psalmist’s words, and perhaps at the same time to the false witness of the psalmist’s enemies. It is almost as if the psalmist begs God, “Can you not hear the insolent and the ruthless as they lie about me?” ...

Notice also that the psalmist does not answer word-for-word those who falsely accuse him. Such a response is the fool's move; implicit in the psalm is the sense that he-said-they-said doesn't get a person anywhere. Instead, the psalmist "sets God" before him, appealing to God to judge on his behalf, to find for the defense if you will, and to reverse the judgment, pronouncing it against the psalmist's enemies. Indeed, before offering a pledge of thanksgiving, the psalmist exults in this reverse judgment saying that God "will repay my enemies for their evil," and that "my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies."...

At the end of the psalm, coming in response to his (presumed? assumed? anticipated?) vindication the psalmist vows an act of thanksgiving for God's judgment against his enemies. The author of the psalm says, "I will sacrifice," presenting a "freewill offering," in order to "give thanks" (verse 6). In worship, the psalmist will celebrate his deliverance.

The most important technical term used in the psalm comes towards the beginning of the psalm however, in verse 2. And this is also probably the most innocuous of the worship related terms in the psalm, at least at first blush: the psalmist offers a "prayer." The psalmist calls his appeal a "prayer." There are several different terms in the Old Testament for "prayer," but the Hebrew word used here is by far the most common. What may be telling is that this word is probably related to the word which means "judge" (cf. Exodus 21:22). In a sense, then, prayer is in-and-of-itself an appeal to God *as judge*. The psalmist directs his speech (an appealing or intercessory prayer) to God the Judge, who will speak in response to the false accusations of the psalmist's enemies, these "insolent" and "ruthless" ones who have risen against him...

One might ask well ask at this point, if any sinner (which all of us most surely are) could ever do such a thing as demand that God act as judge on our behalf. But because God has delivered us from every trouble (verse 7), and because God is our helper (verse 4), even the sinful man or woman can, in the face of evil, rely on God to be not just a judge, not just any judge, but *their* judge.

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1461](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1461) [Karl Jacobson](#)  
Senior Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis, Minn

**James 3:13-4:10; RCL, James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a (James 5:1-12) 13-20); RCL, James 5:13-20)**  
*The readings from James will continue through September 30.*

*Note the differences in the Lutheran and Revised Common Lectionaries for this reading. James Boyce comments on that in this week's introduction.*

*"The big and essential question that engages the preacher and the hearer in this reading is announced in its opening verse: Who is the wise person? And what's to know?"*

*Actually the reading is simply continuing the reflection on true and false wisdom that encompasses this central portion of the epistle of James. As usual the answer that comes is ostensibly simple and direct: good works are the mark of one who possesses wisdom. In so many words, you will know wisdom by its fruits. As usual ...James's theology is practical and down to earth...*

#### ***A missing center***

*For the careful reader it will be important to risk sneaking a peek at what the lectionary has chosen to omit from the reading. The omitted verses 4-6 of chapter 4 are a foundational key*

*for the reflections on wisdom and true spirituality in this section, and in some ways point us to the theological heart of the epistle of James as a whole...” (Continued after the reading)*

### **Wisdom from Above**

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

### **Warning Against Worldliness**

4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions<sup>[a]</sup> are at war within you?<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people!<sup>[c]</sup> Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

- a. [James 4:1](#) Greek *pleasures*; also verse [3](#)
- b. [James 4:1](#) Greek *in your members*
- c. [James 4:4](#) Or *You adulteresses!*

### **“...Wisdom as practical gift**

As noted in last week’s comments, to the mind of James the gift of wisdom is intensely practical. He has already stated that its presence is to be seen in the good works that it produces. And now (verses 14-18) the practical “consequences” of true and false wisdom are exposed. False wisdom is to be seen in selfish ambition, envy, and boastfulness. That is to say, it is self-centered and inward looking, “earthly,” “unspiritual,” and “demonic” to use James’ language (James 3:15). The true wisdom that comes from above as God’s gift, on the other hand, is marked by a practical purity that is evidenced in qualities of peacefulness, gentleness, willingness to yield to the other, mercy, and other good fruits that are devoid of partiality and hypocrisy. Not surprising nor a matter of apology that these qualities sound very much like

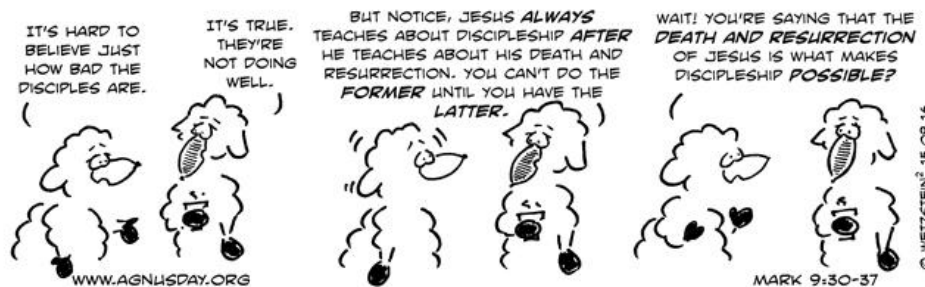


what common sense would identify as goodness. Because that is the way of wisdom. It is a summation all that common sense would identify as the marks of wholeness in human relationships, as the very best of God's gifts in creation. Nor, interestingly, should it be surprising that these qualities sound very much like those qualities that Paul in his letter to the Galatians identifies as the "fruit" of the Spirit -- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22)... "

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2651](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2651) **James Boyce** Emeritus Professor of New Testament and Greek, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

"There are only two ways to live: by the "wisdom" of the world or by God's wisdom. James condemns the worldly pattern of selfishness, deception, hurtful words, and other evil behaviors. Christians, too, struggle with such sins and are even tempted to present themselves as holier than others. How different is the wisdom of God! He has purified us in Christ and freed us from the stain of the world. We now walk in the works He has prepared for us to do."

- "The Lutheran Study Bible, ESV", Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri. Copyright 2009 . Page 2141 [www.cph.com](http://www.cph.com)



**Mark 9:30-37; RCL, the same reading (Mark 9:38-50; RCL, the same reading)**

*"I don't think that the question of greatness has gone away since Jesus' day. From Muhammad Ali's signature boast a generation ago about being "the greatest" to the best-known slogan of the 2016 election – "Make America great again" – we continue to discuss and debate what constitutes greatness. And that question is at the heart of the passage chosen for this Sunday.*

*The scene has a familiar ring to it. Having just heard Mark's account of Jesus' prediction of his passion at Caesarea Philippi, and Peter's rejection of that mission, (Mark 8:27-33) our hearers will likely note the similarity of this week's account, as Jesus once again tells his disciples that he will be betrayed, killed, and raised on the third day. And, as with the last time, they again do not understand or believe what he is saying, even though this is the second time he's told them..."*

- <http://www.davidlose.net/2018/09/pentecost-18-b-a-different-kind-of-greatness/> David Lose
- 

**The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 9th Chapter**



### Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection

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

### Who Is the Greatest?

<sup>33</sup>And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, ***“What were you discussing on the way?”*** <sup>34</sup>But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup>And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, ***“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”*** <sup>36</sup>And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup>***“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”***

***“This is the Gospel of the Lord”***    ***“Praise to You, O Christ”***

“Mark’s intercalations (also known as “sandwiches”) are well known (e.g., Mark 5:21-43).

Mark also places stories side by side as way of making a point that could not have been achieved without such juxtaposition. For instance, the disciples’ lack of insight into Jesus’ identity after the calming of the storm, causing them to ask, “Who then is this?” (Mark 4:41) contrasts with the next story, in which a demon knows Jesus’ identity (Mark 5:7). In the passion narrative, the soldiers mock Jesus with a chant of “Prophesy!” (Mark 14:65). The very next story, in which Peter denies Jesus, provides a direct fulfillment of something that Jesus had indeed prophesied a few verses earlier (Mark 14:26-31).

We are well justified, then, to begin thinking about this gospel reading by looking at how the adjacent episodes can be read together. This reading in Mark 9:30-37 has two distinct episodes, although they are clearly linked as events that happened while travelling in Galilee.

In the first section (Mark 9:30-32), Jesus predicts his death and resurrection for a second time (the first was in Mark 8:31-33). Although the disciples’ reaction by this point is unsurprising, they have no idea what he is talking about. Their fear precludes them from even asking. Fear is ubiquitous in Mark. Characters repeatedly fear Jesus (Mark 4:35-41) or some manifestation of the Kingdom of God associated with him (Mark 5:1-20). Fear, in Mark’s gospel, is the paired opposite of faith. In chapter 10 Jesus gives a third prediction of his death and resurrection, and fear will be the primary response once again (Mark 10:32-34).

The second episode confirms the disciples’ ignorance. Jesus asks them what they had been arguing about, and it turns out the topic had been who was the greatest. The fact that their time had been spent with apostolic jostling confirms just how hardened their hearts have become (an idea first suggested in Mark 6:52). Juxtaposing Jesus’ words about his coming

suffering and their argument about who is the greatest is Mark at his ironic best and contributes to the continued depiction of the disciples and Jesus.

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2620](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2620) *Micah D. Kiel*  
Associate Professor of Theology, St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa

“Jesus is on the way. Last week we met him at Caesarea Philippi, far to the north. Now he is passing through Galilee – on the way to Jerusalem. The secrecy is probably about not wanting to be waylaid. Mark leaves us in no doubt about Jesus’ intentions. In 9:31 he has Jesus repeat the prediction of what would await him there: a path to suffering and death and then to resurrection. When 9:32 mentions the disciples’ lack of understanding, we are reminded of Peter’s confrontation with Jesus from last week (8:31-33). Afraid to ask questions (9:32)? Mark does not approve. But it also has the effect of intensifying the foreboding.

Mark 10:33 brings us already to lower Galilee, to Capernaum, home territory. It also brings us to another low point for the disciples. If in 8:31-33 it was Peter, their spokesperson, here it is the group. They are discussing who is the greatest. We assume they mean the greatest among their number, but the text could also be read more broadly. Certainly Jesus’ answer applies much more broadly than just to the disciples. His journey to Jerusalem embodies his answer. It is the way of Jesus, the way of discipleship which they are to follow.

It is nevertheless interesting that when Mark has Jesus comment, he explicitly mentions ‘the twelve’ (9:35). It certainly applies to leadership. ‘If anyone wants to be first, let them be last of all and servant/slave of all.’ The message will be repeated in 10:41-45, where Jesus contrasts this with leadership styles of the day where people love to flaunt their power and authority. The message is directly subversive of the norms of his day and the norms of ours...

Jesus is challenging both stances: people wanting to use power to establish their own value and people using power as the measure of value of human beings. Jesus subverts both. True greatness is not about either of these relations to power. True greatness is to be like Jesus, a truly powerful person, but who valued himself not because of power but because of his being and his doing the will of God, which meant lowliness, in his case including following the path to the cross. That is all implied in the context of Mark’s story. Jesus in Mark subverts the standard values. He is a king, but wearing a crown of thorns. He is the Christ, but broken on the cross.”

- <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/MkPentecost16.htm> Revd Emeritus Professor William R. G. Loader at [Murdoch University](http://www.murdoch.edu.au), Australia



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