

The Light and the Shepherd

John 9-10

What We Found

A man born blind sat begging, and the disciples asked whose fault he was. Jesus refused the whole calculus, made clay with his own hands, the same gesture as Genesis 2:7, the Creator finishing his work, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, which, John pauses to tell us, means Sent. Anointed, washed, seeing: the Church has read her Baptism in this chapter since her early centuries, and still proclaims it to her catechumens in Lent. Then four interrogations, and two lines crossed: the beggar grew one step per grilling, the man called Jesus, a prophet, a man from God, and finally Lord, I believe, on his knees, worship accepted. The experts who kept saying we know argued themselves blind and cast out the evidence. The only incurable blindness in this Gospel is the kind that says we see.

Then we opened Ezekiel 34 and found the engine under the Good Shepherd discourse: shepherds indicted for feeding themselves and casting out the weak, exactly what we had just watched, and a double promise no ordinary reading can hold together: I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and, my servant David shall feed them. God in person, and the son of David, one shepherding, one job description only Jesus can fill. He gave us two new I AM sayings, the door and the good shepherd, said lays down his life five times, and then handed us the key for everything still to come: no one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord. At Hanukkah he said I and the Father are one, and the stones came out again with the charge stated precisely: you, being a man, make yourself God. And the verse stood where it always stood: one almighty hand that no one can snatch from, distinct persons, one being.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 5.15

Irenaeus reads the clay as the Creator's signature: the same Hands that formed man from the dust in the beginning here form eyes from clay, openly supplying what was left unfinished in the womb. The man who stooped to the mud at Siloam is the God who stooped to the mud in Eden.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 44

Augustine will not let the pool's name pass as trivia: the man washed in the pool that is interpreted Sent, which is to say, he was baptized in Christ. Anointed, sent to the water, washed, and returned seeing: the blind man is every catechumen, and the Church long ago learned to call Baptism illumination.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, Homily 14

The shepherd proved his love by the only proof that cannot be counterfeited: he laid down his life for his sheep. The hireling is exposed not by his title but by what he does when the wolf comes. Gregory preached this as pope and turned it first on his own clergy; and every believer can hear it

after him: we shepherd some corner of life, a family, a friendship, a responsibility; whose example do we follow when protecting the flock begins to cost?

Live It This Week

- **Write your one thing.** The blind man's whole apologetic was one sentence: one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see. Write your own version, one sentence, what he has actually done in your life, and say it out loud once a day until it stops feeling strange.
- **Train your ear.** Sheep learn the shepherd's voice by exposure, not by studying acoustics. Ten minutes a day this week with John 10 open: read a few verses, be quiet, read them again. Voice recognition is built exactly this slowly, and exactly this surely.
- **Renew your illumination.** Next time you enter a church, stop at the font, sign yourself slowly, and pray the blind man's three words: Lord, I believe. You were enlightened once; let the water remind your eyes.

Memory Verse

John 10:11 (RSV2CE)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Before Next Session

Read John 11 and 12. Session 10: The Resurrection and the Life. Keep every tally going, and keep your guess sealed; the Hour is getting close.

Catechism References

CCC 242, 609, 754, 1216.