

He Looked at Him and Loved Him

WHAT WE FOUND

- The man ran and knelt, asked the best question in the Gospel, and had kept the commandments from his youth. St. Mark gives us no reason to think he was insincere. St. Mark presents him sympathetically and gives us no reason to think he is lying, and he still said no.
- St. Mark tells us that Jesus looked at him and loved him, and it is the only time in this Gospel we are told he loved a particular person. The love and the demand are in the same sentence, and the love comes first.
- Jesus named one thing lacking and then asked for everything, and he did not negotiate any part of it.
- When the man left, Jesus did not call after him, soften the terms, offer a smaller version, or follow him down the road. The most important verb in the passage is the one that is missing.
- What he did instead was turn to the disciples and say that with men it is impossible, but not with God. He treated a refusal as an occasion for hope in God rather than as a closed file.
- St. Paul says in five verses that neither planter nor waterer is what gives the growth, and that they are God's fellow workers who each receive wages according to their labour. Both are true, and the second is not diminished by the first. You are not the principal cause, and you are not decoration.
- St. Augustine, quoted in the Catechism: God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.
- Isaiah was commissioned knowing in advance that the people would hear without understanding, and the last word of that commission is that the holy seed is in the stump.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on faith that cannot be forced

The Council taught that a person's response to God in faith must be free, that nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will, and that the act of faith is by its very nature a free act.

And it grounded this not in modern sensibilities but in Christ's own conduct: he invited people to faith and conversion, and never coerced them; he bore witness to the truth and refused to impose it by force on those who spoke against it. The Catechism gathers all of this at CCC 160. Mark 10:22 is what that looks like in practice.

Second Vatican Council, Dignitatis Humanae 10 and 11 (1965), as gathered at CCC 160.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the one line that resolves tonight

God created us without us, St. Augustine said, but he did not will to save us without us.

That sentence is the answer to the question this study has been carrying since Session 1. Our existence required nothing from us. Our salvation is entirely initiated and enabled by grace, and it is not applied to us over our heads: even the free response it asks for is itself grace-assisted. The Catechism thought this important enough to quote it directly.

St. Augustine, Sermon 169, quoted at CCC 1847.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Monica, and a bishop who was tired of her

St. Augustine records in his Confessions that his mother pressed a bishop with her weeping and her requests that he argue with her son, until the bishop, a little displeased at her importunity, told her to go her way and said that it was not possible

that the son of such tears should perish.

Augustine adds that she took those words as though they had sounded from heaven. He was not converted for years afterward. Note the timeline: she prayed, and wept, and waited, and it was a very long time, and she did not know when or how it would come.

St. Augustine, Confessions III.12.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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Rung 9 of the ladder. Pray for the one who has already said no. This rung has no visible action in it at all, and that is the point of the session.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Add one more this week: someone who has already heard, already understood, and already declined. Pray for them by name every day.
- Do not contact them about it. Not this week.
- Write your new sealed line somewhere you will see it. The real fear, now that you have named it.
- Once this week, say to God in plain words: I am not the cause, and I am not optional. Then go and do the small next thing anyway.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

1 Corinthians 3:6

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 2:42-47 before we meet. It is six verses. Read it three times, and read it slowly.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 306.** God makes use of his creatures' cooperation, granting them the dignity of being causes and principles for each other.
- **CCC 307.** God gives human beings the power of freely sharing in his providence.
- **CCC 1847.** God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.
- **CCC 160.** The act of faith is of its very nature free, and Christ never coerced anyone.
- **CCC 1730.** God created us rational, with the dignity of initiating and controlling our own actions.
- **CCC 2002.** God's free initiative demands a free human response.