

Sell What You Have

Deep Calls to Deep · Praying the Scriptures with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila

What We Found

Before Jesus asked the rich man for everything, Mark tells us he looked at him and loved him (Mark 10:21). Every call to let go in this study stands under that gaze. The man's tragedy was not his wealth but his grip: "he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions" (10:22).

The call to leave is the oldest covenant pattern: Abram left country, kindred, and father's house on nothing but a promise (Genesis 12:1-4), and St. Paul gladly counted his whole resume as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Leaving precedes receiving; the exchange always favors us.

St. John of the Cross's *nada* is this Gospel logic applied to the heart: not contempt for God's good creation, but the freeing of desire from every tether, "for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). A bird tied by a thread is as grounded as one tied by a chain; God wants us to fly.

Voices of the Church

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

In his counsels for beginners, St. John teaches, in substance: to come to possess all, desire to possess nothing; to come to be all, desire to be nothing; to come to the knowledge of all, desire to know nothing. And he explains the stakes with his image of the tethered bird: whether the cord is a chain or a thread, the bird is equally unable to fly until it is cut. He is not despising the world. He is refusing to let anything smaller than God own a heart made for God.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book I, ch. 13, summarized; the bird image is from Ascent I, ch. 11.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Teresa devotes early chapters of The Way of Perfection to detachment, and teaches, in substance, that detachment from created things, embraced for God, carries its own reward: the soul that stops grasping finds a freedom and dominion it never had while it clung. She is blunt that half-measures fail; her Life tells the cost of her own years of trying them. But she is equally clear about the direction of the exchange: we let go of lesser goods not to have less, but because God intends to give more.

Summarized from The Way of Perfection, chs. 8-10, on detachment; the personal testimony is from her Life.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

As a small child, offered a basket of ribbons and pretty materials for dressing dolls by her sister and told to choose, Thérèse answered, "I choose all," and took the whole basket. Looking back, she saw her spiritual life in that moment: she would refuse God nothing, and so refuse herself the game of half-gifts. Detachment and "I choose all" are the same movement seen from two sides: empty hands are how you carry everything God wants to give.

Story of a Soul, Manuscript A.

Live It This Week

· Keep the five minutes of daily prayer. This week, begin each time by opening your hands, palms up, for a slow breath: a bodily word for "I am not grasping."

- Choose one small, real detachment for the week (one comfort, one purchase, one scroll session) and give it up quietly, telling no one but God. Attach it to a prayer for one person.
- Reread Philippians 3:7-11 once mid-week and mark the verbs Paul uses for what he gained.

MEMORY VERSE · PHILIPPIANS 3:8

"Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Before next session: Read Matthew 6:5-6 and John 14:23. Notice where Jesus says prayer happens, and who he promises will be there.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 2544, 2545, 2547.