

Come to the Waters

Isaiah 54-55

WHAT WE FOUND

Last week's riddle, the childless Servant who "*shall see his offspring*", was answered, read canonically, by a page turn: a barren woman commanded to *sing*, because "*the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married*" (54:1). Paul names her "*the Jerusalem above... our mother*" (Galatians 4:26-27), whom the Church has always understood of herself, teeming with children born of the Servant's travail: read whole, we are the offspring of 53:10. And God flood-proofed the covenant with a Noah oath: the exile was a *moment*; the compassion is *everlasting*; mountains may depart, "*but my steadfast love shall not depart from you*" (54:10).

Then the free market: "*Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!*" (55:1). Thirst and bankruptcy are the entire admission criteria; the goods are real (*buy*, twice) and the price is paid (last week's chapter was the invoice). Verse 2 diagnosed our whole economy: "*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?*", the question St. Augustine turned into the most famous autobiography ever written: our heart is restless until it rests in you. And the feast has an address: the Eucharist, the Lord's own standing invitation (CCC 1384), where the penniless buy, the mountain banquet of chapter 25 and the Servant's self-offering at one table.

We faced a chapter the Reformers loved, at full strength, is free grace something Rome forgot?, and answered from the Church's own books: grace is *free and undeserved*, justification depends entirely on *God's gratuitous initiative* (CCC 1996-1998); no one has a strict right to merit, and our merits are themselves God's gifts (CCC 2007-2009); the indulgence abuses were real; Trent ordered the evil traffic abolished, and St. Pius V afterward suppressed the sales. The verse's own paradox settles the deeper point: *buy... without money*: the gift is free and the receiving is active; sacraments are how the feast is eaten, and nobody calls eating the price of dinner. The Bible's last page renews the invitation almost in Isaiah's own words: "*take the water of life without price*" (Revelation 22:17). And the Book of Consolation closed its frame: the word that stands forever (40:8) is the word that never returns empty (55:11). Everything between was that word, working.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose • *On the Mysteries (paraphrase)*

You have come to the altar; the sacraments you now receive are greater than the manna your fathers ate in the wilderness, for they ate and died. Our reflection: what the prophet cried in the street, come, buy without money, the Church performs at every liturgy, and the poorest communicant leaves richer than kings.

St. Augustine • *Confessions*

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. Augustine spent his money and labor on everything that is not bread and found each hunger intact. The

restlessness was not a defect but an address label: the heart is shaped like the feast.

St. Ephrem the Syrian • *Hymns*

The Eucharist is the Medicine of Life: bread that heals the eaters, a cup in which immortality is mixed for mortals. Where merchants sell what perishes to those who perish, the Physician sets out, free of charge, the one food that cures the disease of death.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Receive Communion this Sunday with Isaiah 55:1-2 prayed in the pew beforehand: come thirsty, come broke, and buy without money.
- Fast once this week from your chief not-bread, one day, one app, one habit, and give the reclaimed time or money to someone hungry for actual bread.
- Plant one seed of the word deliberately, a verse shared, an invitation made, and release the harvest schedule: 55:11 has underwritten it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.”

Isaiah 55:6 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Isaiah 56:1-8 and 58:1-12.

Catechism References From This Session

CCC 1996-1998 • CCC 2007-2009 • CCC 1384