

Take-Home: Session 4, Are the Stakes Fair?

WHAT WE FOUND

We tested the assumption this study began with: that heaven and hell are decided by a belief quiz. Scripture and the Church describe something richer, in which faith is a life rather than a quiz answer: faith in Christ, received in grace and working through love, remains necessary where the Gospel is known, and judgment according to works manifests the reality of that response. God renders to every one according to works; those who never received the law are judged by the law written on their hearts, conscience bearing witness. Jesus' most extended depiction of the last judgment grades on concrete love, and surprises everyone in it. Accountability scales to knowledge: much given, much required. Hell, in the Catechism's own word, is self-exclusion: God predestines no one to it, and losing him requires grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent, persisted in without repentance to the end (CCC 1857-1861, 1037), not honest mistake. The stakes are real, and the Judge is the one who was sent not to condemn the world but to save it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

From St. Augustine's *Sermons* (Sermon 169): God, who created you without you, will not justify you without you. Salvation is never imposed; damnation is never arbitrary. The stakes are real because the freedom is real.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, St. John Henry Newman calls conscience the aboriginal Vicar of Christ: a witness to God's law already in every heart, before any missionary arrives, a conscience that must be followed and formed. No one faces the Judge as a stranger.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

A saying from his *Sayings of Light and Love*, quoted by the Catechism at CCC 1022: at the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love. The examination at the end is not a theology exam. It is an examination in love.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Do one deliberate, inconvenient act of Matthew 25 love this week: feed, visit, welcome, clothe, or show up. Do not announce it.
- Continue the daily honest sentence to God. If tonight raised a fear or a grief, that is this week's sentence.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:17 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Psalm 77, slowly, once. Notice where the psalm turns, and what the psalmist starts doing at the turn.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

CCC 1021 to 1022; 1033; 1036 to 1037; 1861; 847.