

The LORD Is There

Session 3. The Watchman and the Brick

God made Ezekiel responsible for the warning, never for the results, and then made the man's own body the sermon.

What We Found

God appointed Ezekiel a watchman, and the job description was startlingly precise: hear the word from God's mouth and pass on the warning. That is the whole duty. Whether anyone listens, turns, or lives was never placed on the watchman's shoulders. For anyone exhausted by trying to control other people's souls, that line between faithfulness and outcomes is a mercy, not a loophole.

We watched the charge outlive the prophet: an apostle saying farewell to a church he founded echoed Ezekiel's language of blood and warning (Acts 20:26-31), and handed the watch on to the shepherds of the Church. The watchman's trumpet is still in service, and in some measure it is in our hands.

Then God did something stranger than words. He silenced his prophet except when God himself opened his mouth, and preached through the man's body instead: a city scratched on a Babylonian brick with an iron plate set between the prophet and the city, months lying on one side bearing the measured weight of the people's sin, siege rations eaten in public, a shaved head divided into thirds. And hidden in the hair sign, a small mercy: a few hairs bound into the hem of the garment, kept close, though verse 4 sends some even of those into the fire.

We also caught the God behind the hard commands listening: when Ezekiel objected from conscience to one detail, God adjusted it. Obedience and honest dialogue with God are not enemies.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory the Great, d. 604

Preaching on this very passage, St. Gregory teaches that the preacher is called a watchman because a watchman stands on the heights to see danger while it is still far off; whoever would warn others must live on a height of vision and of life. Then, remarkably, this pope turns the text against himself: he confesses that his own tongue does not always preach as it ought and that his life does not always follow even what his tongue manages to say, yet he does not dare fall silent, because the charge to warn still stands.

Homilies on Ezekiel, Book 1, Homily 11. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For anyone in the room who feels too compromised to speak up for the faith: the greatest preacher-pope of the early Middle Ages felt exactly that, and concluded that his weakness excused him from pride, not from the trumpet.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, d. c. 107

I am God's wheat, and I am to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Christ.

Letter to the Romans 4.

For the group. Ignatius, traveling under guard to his execution, understood that his body itself had become his last and loudest sermon. He is the clearest early Christian heir of what God does with Ezekiel tonight: the witness's flesh preaches what words alone cannot.

St. John Henry Newman, d. 1890

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission.

Meditations and Devotions.

For the group. This is the watchman's charge translated for the person in the chair next to you: a definite, personal commission whose faithful execution, not whose visible success, is what God asks. Newman goes on in the same meditation to draw the conclusion Ezekiel needed: therefore I will trust him, whatever I am, wherever I am.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Choose one honest conversation you have been avoiding and take one concrete step toward it this week: schedule the coffee, write the message, or, if the moment is truly not right, write out what you would say and pray it daily until it is.
2. Make an examination of conscience one evening with a single question: what warning from God, through Scripture, a homily, a friend, or my own conscience, have I been politely ignoring? If it points to something serious, bring it to confession this week.
3. Once this week, eat one deliberately plain, simple meal, and while you eat it, pray for people in exile today: refugees, the imprisoned, anyone far from home, and for the courage to speak truth in love.
4. Memorize Ezekiel 3:17 and say it each morning as a question: whom has God set me to watch over today?

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 3:17

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me."

Ezekiel 3:17

Ready Response

When a friend says: real love never tells someone they're wrong.

A watchman who sees the sword coming and stays quiet isn't loving the city; he's abandoning it.

The Church counts warning and advising among the works of mercy, right alongside feeding the hungry, because sometimes the truth is the food someone needs.

But the watchman only sounds the trumpet; he never forces anyone into shelter. Real love warns, and then respects freedom.

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 1146.** God reaches us, body and spirit, through physical signs
- **CCC 1829.** charity includes fraternal correction
- **CCC 1868.** culpable silence can make us share in others' sins
- **CCC 2447.** instructing and advising are spiritual works of mercy

Before next session. Read Ezekiel 8-11 before we meet again, in one sitting if you can.