

The LORD Is There

Session 6. The Foundling Bride

Everything the bride has is gift, and the marriage survives because the Husband keeps his vows.

What We Found

God tells Jerusalem her own story as a parable: an abandoned newborn he rescued, raised, and married. We listed his actions in verses 1 to 14 and noticed that the foundling contributes nothing but her need; even her famous beauty, verse 14 says, was perfect through the splendor he bestowed. The covenant does not begin with law or performance. It begins with rescue.

Verse 8 turns out to be a wedding, and we found that the other prophets speak the same way: the covenant at Sinai is an espousal, which the Church still teaches. That reframes sin. When the bride trusts in her beauty and spends every gift on idols, garments, gold, food, even the children, this is not rule-breaking. It is adultery against a rescuer, and the wounded party is God.

We faced the hard middle of the chapter honestly: the violent imagery is a figurative telling of the historical fall of Jerusalem, indicting Jerusalem as a whole, and heard first by a ruling establishment that was meant to feel exposed, and the chapter's destination is not disposal but restoration. We also read verse 49 and were surprised: the guilt God names first in Sodom is pride, plenty, prosperous ease, and neglect of the poor. Judgment is measured by light received, and that warning is aimed at religious insiders.

Then the ending. After fifty-nine verses of failure, every verb in verse 60 belongs to God: yet I will remember my covenant, I will establish an everlasting covenant. The marriage survives not because the bride was faithful but because the Husband is. And we found that the New Testament carries the picture forward: Christ the Bridegroom washes his bride, clothes her in splendor at his own expense, and calls the cup of the Last Supper the new covenant in his blood. The shame of verse 63 can be read gently: not the shame that hides from God, but the humbled silence of a person forgiven past all self-justification.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine, d. 430

Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you.

Confessions X.27.

For the group. Augustine is the foundling grown up: everything was gift, and he spent years spending the gifts on lesser loves before turning to the Giver.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, d. 1153

St. Bernard teaches that of all the movements of the soul, love alone allows the creature to answer its Creator in kind: God does not need our fear or our service, but when God loves, he wants nothing other than to be loved in return. The soul that loves God is not merely a servant or a debtor; she is a bride.

Sermons on the Song of Songs (the theme is concentrated in Sermon 83). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is why Ezekiel 16 is a marriage and not a contract. God did not rescue the foundling to acquire a servant; he wanted a heart.

St. John Paul II, d. 2005

*St. John Paul II teaches that the Old Testament's deepest word for God's mercy, **hesed**, names a love that stays faithful to the covenant even after the human partner has broken it. When Israel betrays the covenant, God's fidelity does not collapse, because in the end God is being faithful to himself, to his own love and his own promises. Mercy, on this reading, is covenant love that refuses to quit.*

Dives in Misericordia, in its treatment of the Old Testament's language for mercy. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is Ezekiel 16:59-63 in a single word. Her covenant is broken; his *hesed* holds. It is also what every penitent leans on in the confessional.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Each evening this week, before you plan anything or scroll anything, name one good thing from your day out loud and say where it actually came from. One sentence is enough. You are practicing verse 14: the splendor was bestowed.
2. Make a concrete plan, day and time, to get to confession within the next two weeks. Bring Ezekiel 16:63 with you and let the absolution be the moment the verse describes: when I forgive you all that you have done.
3. Once this week, read Ezekiel 16:59-63 slowly, alone, and pray one sentence back to God in your own words. If nothing comes, pray verse 60 back to him as it stands.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 16:60

"yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant."

Ezekiel 16:60

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 219.** God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love is victorious over even the worst infidelities
- **CCC 1611.** the prophets saw the covenant as exclusive, faithful married love
- **CCC 1612.** the nuptial covenant prepared the new and everlasting covenant in Christ
- **CCC 796.** Christ and the Church as bridegroom and bride

Before next session. Read Ezekiel 18 before we meet again.