

The LORD Is There

Session 8. For My Name's Sake

At every point where the story should have ended, God said: but I acted for the sake of my name.

What We Found

The elders came to Ezekiel wanting an oracle, and God refused, just as he had refused in chapter 14 while idols sat in hearts. Instead he retold Israel's whole history under oath, and it was darker than the version Israel told itself: idolatry already in Egypt, rebellion in the wilderness, twice over. And yet the story never ended, because of one refrain: but I acted for the sake of my name. The exodus itself was never a reward. It was mercy, anchored not in Israel's record but in God's own character and covenant.

We watched the exiles' secret plan surface, to assimilate and disappear among the nations, and we heard God's answer: a second exodus, announced in the very arm-and-hand language of the first, running through a new wilderness and a real judgment, and ending in accepted worship on God's holy mountain. The restored people grieve what they were, but only after they are home and held: contrition inside mercy, never shame instead of it. And the verse that gathers the whole night: you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways.

Then the crown came off. The last king of David's line was stripped of turban and crown, and the throne of four centuries went empty: a ruin, a ruin, a ruin. But the sentence did not end in ruin. It ended with an until: until he comes whose right it is, and to him I will give it. We traced that line back to Jacob's deathbed blessing over Judah, the promise that the scepter waits for the one to whom it belongs, and forward to the angel's words to Mary, that God would give Jesus the throne of his father David and a kingdom without end. Exile did not cancel the promise. It cleared the stage for the heir.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine, d. 430

When God crowns our merits, he crowns nothing other than his own gifts.

Letter 194 (to Sixtus), 5.19.

For the group. This is verse 44 in one sentence: God deals with us for his name's sake, not according to our ways, and even the good we manage to do began as his gift.

St. Justin Martyr, d. c. 165

Justin argues, in substance, that Jacob's blessing over Judah, that the scepter would not depart until he comes to whom it belongs, is fulfilled in Christ: the visible kingship of Judah could lapse only because the one for whom it was held in trust had come, and the obedience of the peoples now gathers to him.

First Apology 32. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. The connection we made tonight is one Christians have made since the second century; this is not a modern connect-the-dots.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, d. 1897

St. Thérèse resolved, in substance, that in the evening of this life she would appear before God with empty hands, not asking him to count her works, since all our justice has stains in his sight, but asking instead to be clothed with God's own justice and to receive from his love the eternal possession of himself.

Act of Oblation to Merciful Love (1895). Summary of her teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is what it looks like when a soul actually believes Ezekiel 20:44: not laxity, but a total confidence that rests on God's character rather than her own record.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Write your own Ezekiel 20. One page, private, no one sees it: a timeline of your history with God, marking the rebellions honestly and the mercies honestly. Over each mercy you did not earn, write for his name's sake. Bring what the exercise taught you, not the paper.
2. Wear the sign in time. The sabbath was the covenant badge Israel could keep even in Babylon. This Sunday, keep the Lord's Day deliberately: Mass, plus one honest hour of rest with no screen, chosen in advance and kept like an appointment.
3. Pray the Our Father slowly once a day this week, and stop for ten full seconds after hallowed be thy name. In the silence, ask God to hallow his name in you, the way he hallowed it in Israel: by mercy.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 20:44

"And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel 20:44

Ready Response

When a friend says: a God who saves people to protect his own reputation sounds like an egotist.

For a creature, self-promotion is theft, because the glory belongs to someone else. God is the source of all good, so pointing us to himself and giving us our deepest good are the same act.

And look at what acting for his name's sake actually produced: rescue, three times over, for people who had earned none of it. In the covenant, God has tied his name to his people like a ring. His saving action for the sake of his name shows that his glory is not set against the good he intends for his people.

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 2811.** Israel profaned God's name among the nations, so the hope grew that God himself would hallow his own name by saving his people
- **CCC 122.** the Old Testament shows the true pedagogy of God, a patient father teaching over centuries
- **CCC 210-211.** God reveals the meaning of his name as mercy and fidelity, even to a sinful people
- **CCC 2008.** merit exists only because God freely chose to associate us with the work of his grace
- **CCC 2011.** the charity of Christ is the source of all our merits; the Catechism quotes St. Thérèse's offering here

Before next session. Read Ezekiel 24 and Ezekiel 33:1-33 before we meet again.