

Session 9 · Eyes Opened

Tobit 10-11

What We Found

Back in Nineveh, the silence had run past every count, and the parents bore it each in their own way: Tobit by hypothesis, Anna by vigil, my child has perished, and still she went out every day to the road by which they left. Hope, at its lowest, is where the body stands. When she finally saw them coming, her embrace carried the line the Church sings every night: I have seen you, my child; now I am ready to die, the human draft of Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*: mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

Then the sentence that undoes readers: Tobit, hearing his son's voice, stumbled out through the door, a blind man running on voice alone, love outrunning sight, the prodigal's father before the prodigal's father. The gall carried since the Tigris did its work, the white films scaled from his eyes, and the first act of healed sight was recognition, embrace, and doxology: thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias! Affliction and mercy held in one sentence, with no erasure and no resentment. And at the feast sat Ahikar, the footnote of chapter 1 at the table of chapter 11: providence plants its helpers early and gathers them at the feast.

With our own hands we found the Lord's clinic in John 9: clay made of spittle, anointed on blind eyes, a commanded washing in Siloam, healing landing on obedience, Jesus healing blindness in Tobit's exact grammar of matter, word, and faith. That is the sacramental principle at full height: God saves bodily creatures bodily, and his preference became the sacraments, which confer the grace they signify because Christ himself is at work in them, down to the oil on the sick today (James 5:14-15). And a phrase in John 9:3 was held for next week; if you caught it, keep it folded.

Against cessationism, the claim that the miraculous sign-gifts ceased with the apostles (its strongest advocates grant that God may still heal providentially in answer to prayer, but deny any continuing normative ministry or sacrament of healing), we conceded the honorable pastoral instinct and the need for discernment, then pressed: Scripture contains no expiration verse and does contain a standing ordinance (James 5); Augustine answered this exact claim by having recent healings recorded and read publicly in his own church; and the Church's evidence desk at Lourdes and in canonization causes is ruthlessly stringent: cures must be sudden, complete, lasting, and medically inexplicable, and the overwhelming majority of claims are rejected. The Catholic both-and stands: God heals through medicine, sacrament, and miracle, and sometimes not yet, and the not-yet is not his retirement, any more than Tobit's dark years were.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons · *Against Heresies* 5.3.2 (c. AD 180)

Against those who despised the body, Irenaeus insists the flesh is capable of receiving the power and gift of God: the God who formed us from clay does not abandon what he formed but heals and raises it. Gall on blind eyes, oil on sick bodies, water on new Christians: all of it flows from the conviction that God likes matter, made it, took it, and saves through it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ephrem the Syrian · *Hymns (4th century)*

The harp of the Spirit sings Christ as the Medicine of Life: the physician who came down to a wounded world and bound its sores with his own hands. Salvation is a healing, and the sacraments are the Physician's pharmacy. Tobias walking home with a cure in his hand is a small early sketch of the Son walking into the world with the cure in his flesh.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo · *The City of God 22.8 (c. AD 426)*

Answering the claim that the age of miracles had passed, Augustine recounts numerous recent healings, many by name, some attested in written accounts (*libelli*) read publicly at Hippo, and insists miracles are wrought in Christ's name even now, only less famous for being local. The God of Tobit's homecoming has not retired, and the bishop of Hippo had the testimonies written down and read aloud to prove it.

Live It This Week

1. Convert one worry into a vigil: name the person, and take a post, a set time and place of daily prayer for them this week, standing where Anna stood. Hope is where the body stands.
2. Pray the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-32) each night before sleep this week, the Church's own bedtime, and before it, name aloud one thing your eyes saw that day that was mercy.
3. If illness touches your life or your family's, ask your pastor about the Anointing of the Sick, it is for the seriously ill and for the elderly whose frailty has become pronounced, not only the dying (CCC 1514-1515). And read Tobit 12 before next session. It is short. Read it twice. Everything in this study meets us there.

Scripture Memory · **Tobit 11:15 (RSV2CE)**

"For thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias!"

Before Next Session. Read Tobit 12, twice.

Catechism CCC 1084 · CCC 1127 · CCC 1503-1505 · CCC 1514-1515 · CCC 1520