

## Conclusion: Claiming and Reclaiming Christian Theodical Prayer

Lenten Soup Supper Series at Christ Episcopal Church Eureka

March 27, 2018

The Rev. Daniel London, PhD

Review our journey down the river of the Fourth Gospel

Blaming the Victim?	Day, Night, and Light (John 9:1-7)
Blaming the Victimizer?	Vision, Blindness, and Judge (John 9:8-41)
Blaming God?	Sheep, Wolf, and Shepherd (John 10:1-21)

Invitation to Theodical Prayer

*As a people who profess a God who becomes incarnate as a man who is put on trial and prosecuted by humanity, we Christians are invited by this theodical reading of the Fourth Gospel to see the self-giving love of our God as a divine response to our question of suffering and compulsion to blame.*

*As a people who profess a Savior who responds to the question of suffering by offering the symbol of a Good Shepherd who lays down his life, we Christians are thus invited to pray to a God who can receive and withstand all of our disappointment, confusion, violence and rage.*

Christian figures who have employed theodical prayer:

Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

Julian of Norwich (1342 – 1430)

Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582)

George Herbert (1593 – 1633)

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth  
**Engine against th' Almighty**, sinner's tow'r,  
**Reversed thunder**, **Christ-side-piercing spear**,  
The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;  
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,  
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,  
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,  
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
The land of spices; something understood.

Prayer as Christ-side-piercing-spear?

Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) shimmers in the background of John 9 and 10

The Israelites grumble and complain

Moses says, “Draw near to God for he has heard your complaining” (Exodus 16:9)

Moses then command to strike a rock (Ex 17:6)

In light of our reading of John 9:1-10:21, we can see the rock as a symbol of the God who in Christ receives our compulsion to blame (just as God received the grumbings of the Israelites) and who responds with love and forgiveness.

Just as Christ’s side poured out life-giving water and blood as it was pierced by the spear and the rock poured out water as it was struck by Moses so too does the Good Shepherd pour out self-giving love, life and forgiveness when we unleash upon him our anger, our compulsion to blame and our violent wolves.

In this way, our wolves can be transformed into members of the Good Shepherd’s beloved flock.

As the Jewish man in Jerusalem struck the bricks of the Western Wall, we can pray by striking the rock of Christ, who pours out rivers of living water, in which our lambs may wade and our wolves can swim.

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Our study and exploration of John 9 and 10 has concluded with a call to deeper prayer and discipleship.

Beginning in May, I will offer Introduction to **Christian Discipleship Groups**. These will be small groups of 6 people max and will require a commitment of regular attendance to one-hour meetings for 6 weeks in a row.

Discipleship Group A will meet on Tuesdays 6 – 7 PM on these dates: May 15, 22, 29 and June 5, 12, 19

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Discipleship Group B will meet on Tuesdays 6 – 7 PM on these dates: July 17, 24, 31 and August 7, 14, 21

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Discipleship Group C will meet on Tuesdays 6 – 7 PM on these dates: Sept 11, 18, 25 and Oct 2, 9, 16

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