

A Reading from the homilies of St Augustine on St John's Gospel

"I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." As these few words of the Lord are partly command and partly promise, let us do what he commanded, and not merely desire what he promised, which would be presumptuous; lest he should ask us at the judgment, "Have you done what I commanded, that you may obtain what I promised?" What have you commanded, O Lord our God? He tells you, "That you follow me." You have sought advice on life. What life, if not that of which it is said, "With you is the fountain of life."?

We must therefore get to work, and follow the Lord; we must break the chains which impede our following him. Now who can break those shackles unless he is aided by him to whom it was said, "You have loosed my bonds"? Another psalm says of him, "The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord raises up those who have fallen."

What do those who have been freed and raised up follow if not the light, of which they have heard, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness"? For the Lord gives light to the blind. We are now enlightened, brothers and sisters, helped by the eye-salve of the faith. The Lord's spittle was once mixed with the earth to anoint the man who was born blind. We too were born blind from Adam, and need to be given sight by the Lord. He mixed spittle with earth: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He mixed spittle with earth; so it was predicted, "Truth has sprung up from the earth." He tells us himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

We shall enjoy the truth when we see face to face, for this too is promised us. Indeed, who would dare to hope for what God had not deigned either to promise or to give?

We shall see face to face. The Apostle tells us, "Now my knowledge is imperfect. Now I see in a mirror dimly, but then I shall see face to face." And the apostle John writes in his letter, "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." This is a tremendous promise.

If you love, then follow. I do love, you say, but what way am I to follow? If the Lord your God said to you, "I am the way, the truth and the life," you, desiring truth and eager for life, would immediately seek the way to attain these. You would say to yourself, what a tremendous thing truth is, what a tremendous thing life is, were there only the means by which my soul could reach them."

Do you ask, by what way? Listen to him saying to you first of all, "I am the way." The way where? "And the truth and the life." First he told you the way to come, then where. I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. While remaining with the Father, he was truth and life; putting on flesh, he became the way...

The Word of God has cured even the lame. Look, you say, I have sound feet, but I cannot see the way. He has given sight to the blind, too.