

John 1:11

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon highlights the problem of unbelief among the Jews and the Gentiles, and explains that the root of all evils is pride, which leads to unbelief and blindness to God's righteousness.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:5, John 1:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 11:7, 1 Timothy 3:6

Topics: "Rejection Of Christ", "Pride And Humility"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the rejection of Jesus by His own people, highlighting the blindness and pride that led to their unbelief despite witnessing miracles and hearing the words of the prophets. He emphasizes the contrast between the Jews, who rejected Christ, and the Gentiles, who embraced Him through faith, showing that salvation is freely offered to all. Chrysostom warns against the dangers of pride, explaining how envy and arrogance can lead to a hardened heart and separation from God's lovingkindness, urging humility and gratitude for God's grace.

Transcript

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

1. If you remember our former reflections, we shall the more zealously proceed with the building up of what remains, as doing so for great gain. For so will our discourse be more intelligible to you who remember what has been already said, and we shall not need much labor, because you are able through your great love of learning to see more clearly into what remains. The man who is always losing what is given to him will always need a teacher, and will never know anything; but he who retains what he has received, and so receives in addition what remains, will quickly be a teacher instead of a learner, and useful not only to himself, but to all others also; as, conjecturing from their great readiness to hear, I anticipate that this assembly will specially be. Come then, let us lay up in your souls, as in a safe treasury, the Lord's money, and unfold, as far as the grace of the Spirit may afford us power, the words this day set before us.

He (St. John) had said, speaking of the old times, that the world knew him not John 1:10; afterwards he comes down in his narrative to the times of the proclamation (of the Gospel), and says, He came to His own, and His own received Him not, now calling the Jews His own, as His peculiar people, or perhaps even all mankind, as created by Him. And as above, when perplexed at the folly of the many, and ashamed of our common nature, he said that the world by Him was made, and having been made, did not recognize its Maker; so here again, being troubled beyond bearing at the stupidity of the Jews and the

many, he sets forth the charge in a yet more striking manner, saying, that His own received Him not, and that too when He came to them. And not only he, but the prophets also, wondering, said the very same, as did afterwards Paul, amazed at the very same things. Thus did the prophets cry aloud in the person of Christ, saying, A people whom I have not known, have served Me; as soon as they heard Me, they obeyed Me; the strange children have dealt falsely with Me. The strange children have waxed aged, and have halted from their paths. Psalm 18:43-45, Septuagint And again, They to whom it had not been told concerning Him, shall see, and they which had not heard, shall understand. And, I was found of them that sought Me not Isaiah 52:15; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. Isaiah 45:1, as quoted in Romans 10:20 And Paul, in his Epistles to the Romans, has said, What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for: but the election has obtained it. Romans 11:7 And again; What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness: but Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Romans 9:30

For it is a thing indeed worthy of our amazement, how they who were nurtured in (knowledge of) the prophetic books, who heard Moses every day telling them ten thousand things concerning the coming of the Christ, and the other prophets afterwards, who moreover themselves beheld Christ Himself daily working miracles among them, giving up His time to them alone, neither as yet allowing His disciples to depart into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into a city of Samaritans, nor doing so Himself, but everywhere declaring that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel Matthew 10:5: how, (I say), while they saw the signs, and heard the Prophets, and had Christ Himself continually putting them in remembrance, they yet made themselves once for all so blind and dull, as by none of these things to be brought to faith in Christ. Matthew 15:24 While they of the Gentiles, who had enjoyed none of these things, who had never heard the oracles of God, not, as one may say, so much as in a dream, but ever ranging among the fables of madmen, (for heathen philosophy is this,) having ever in their hands the sillinesses of their poets, nailed to stocks and stones, and neither in doctrines nor in conversation possessing anything good or sound. (For their way of life was more impure and more accursed than their doctrine. As was likely; for when they saw their gods delighting in all wickedness, worshipped by shameful words, and more shameful deeds, reckoning this festivity and praise, and moreover honored by foul murders, and child-slaughters, how should not they emulate these things?) Still, fallen as they were as low as the very depth of wickedness, on a sudden, as by the agency of some machine, they have appeared to us shining from on high, and from the very summit of heaven.

How then and whence came it to pass? Hear Paul telling you. For that blessed person searching exactly into these things, ceased not until he had found the cause, and had declared it to all others. What then is it? And whence came such blindness upon the Jews? Hear him who was entrusted with this stewardship declare. What then does he say in resolving this doubt of the many? 1 Corinthians 9:17 For they, says he, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Romans 10:3 Wherefore they have suffered this. And again, explaining the same matter in other terms, he says, What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. Romans 9:30-32 His meaning is this: These men's unbelief has been the cause of their misfortunes, and their haughtiness was parent of their unbelief. For when having before enjoyed greater privileges than the heathen, through having received the law, through knowing God, and the rest which Paul enumerates,

they after the coming of Christ saw the heathen and themselves called on equal terms through faith, and after faith received one of the circumcision in nothing preferred to the Gentile, they came to envy and were stung by their haughtiness, and could not endure the unspeakable and exceeding lovingkindness of the Lord. So this has happened to them from nothing else but pride, and wickedness, and unkindness.

2. For in what, O most foolish of men, are you injured by the care bestowed on others? How are your blessings made less through having others to share the same? But of a truth wickedness is blind, and cannot readily perceive anything that it ought. Being therefore stung by the prospect of having others to share the same confidence, they thrust a sword against themselves, and cast themselves out from the lovingkindness of God. And with good reason. For He says, Friend, I do you no wrong, I will give to 'these also' even as unto you. Matthew 20:14 Or rather, these Jews are not deserving even of these words. For the man in the parable if he was discontented, could yet speak of the labors and weariness, the heat and sweat, of a whole day. But what could these men have to tell? Nothing like this, but slothfulness and profligacy and ten thousand evil things of which all the prophets continued ever to accuse them, and by which they like the Gentiles had offended against God. And Paul declaring this says, For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by His grace. Romans 10:12; Romans 3:22-24 And on this head he treats profitably and very wisely throughout that Epistle. But in a former part of it he proves that they are worthy of still greater punishment. For as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law Romans 2:12; that is to say, more severely, as having for their accuser the law as well as nature. And not for this only, but for that they have been the cause that God is blasphemed among the Gentiles: My Name, He says, is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you. Romans 2:24; Isaiah 52:5

Since now this it was that stung them most, (for the thing appeared incredible even to those of the circumcision who believed, and therefore they brought it as a charge against Peter, when he had come up to them from Cesarea, that he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them Acts 11:3; and after that they had learned the dispensation of God, even so still they wondered how on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost Acts 10:45: showing by their astonishment that they could never have expected so incredible a thing,) since then he knew that this touched them nearest, see how he has emptied their pride and relaxed their highly swelling insolence. For after having discoursed on the case of the heathen, and shown that they had not from any quarter any excuse, or hope of salvation, and after having definitely charged them both with the perversion of their doctrines and the uncleanness of their lives, he shifts his argument to the Jews; and after recounting all the expressions of the Prophet, in which he had said that they were polluted, treacherous, hypocritical persons, and had altogether become unprofitable, that there was none among them that seeks after God, that they had all gone out of the way Romans 3:12, and the like, he adds, Now we know that whatever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Romans 3:19 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

Why then exaltest you yourself, O Jew? Why are you high minded? For your mouth also is stopped, your boldness also is taken away, you also with all the world have become guilty, and, like others, are placed in need of being justified freely. You ought surely even if you had stood upright and had had great boldness with God, not even so to have envied those who should be pitied and saved through His lovingkindness. This is the extreme of wickedness, to pine at the blessings of others; especially when this was to be effected without any loss of yours. If indeed the salvation of others had been prejudicial to your advantages, your grieving might have been reasonable; though not even then would it have been so to

one who had learned true wisdom. But if your reward is not increased by the punishment of another, nor diminished by his welfare, why do you bewail yourself because that other is freely saved? As I said, you ought not, even were thou (one) of the approved, to be pained at the salvation which comes to the Gentiles through grace. But when you, who are guilty before your Lord of the same things as they, and have yourself offended, are displeased at the good of others, and think great things, as if you alone ought to be partaker of the grace, you are guilty not only of envy and insolence, but of extreme folly, and may be liable to all the severest torments; for you have planted within yourself the root of all evils, pride.

Wherefore a wise man has said, Pride is the beginning of sin Sirach 10:13: that is, its root, its source, its mother. By this the first created was banished from that happy abode: by this the devil who deceived him had fallen from that height of dignity; from which that accursed one, knowing that the nature of the sin was sufficient to cast down even from heaven itself, came this way when he labored to bring down Adam from such high honor. For having puffed him up with the promise that he should be as a God, so he broke him down, and cast him down into the very gulfs of hell. Because nothing so alienates men from the lovingkindness of God, and gives them over to the fire of the pit, as the tyranny of pride. For when this is present with us, our whole life becomes impure, even though we fulfill temperance, chastity, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, anything. For, Every one, says the wise man, that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Proverbs 16:5 Let us then restrain this swelling of the soul, let us cut up by the roots this lump of pride, if at least we would wish to be clean, and to escape the punishment appointed for the devil. For that the proud must fall under the same punishment as that (wicked) one, hear Paul declare; Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the judgment, and the snare of the devil. What is the judgment? He means, into the same condemnation, the same punishment. How then does he say, that a man may avoid this dreadful thing? By reflecting upon his own nature, upon the number of his sins, upon the greatness of the torments in that place, upon the transitory nature of the things which seem bright in this world, differing in nothing from grass, and more fading than the flowers of spring. If we continually stir within ourselves these considerations, and keep in mind those who have walked most upright, the devil, though he strive ten thousand ways, will not be able to lift us up, nor even to trip us at all. May the God who is the God of the humble, the good and merciful God, grant both to you and me a broken and humbled heart, so shall we be enabled easily to order the rest aright, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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