

# John 11:41-48

by St. John Chrysostom

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*Christ's humility and condescension are demonstrated through His words and actions, which show His identity of will with the Father and His desire to persuade men that He is not an enemy of God.*

**Scripture:** John 5:28

**Topics:** "Christ's Humility", "Prayer And Repentance"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the humility and condescension of Christ in His words and actions, emphasizing how His lowly sayings were meant to draw people to faith while His high sayings often caused offense. Chrysostom highlights Christ's identity with the Father, His authority over death, and the importance of prayer as a means to persuade and reveal His unity with the Father. He condemns malice, greed, and hypocrisy as destructive forces, urging for mourning and repentance for those who harm others for personal gain.

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## Transcript

Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me; and I knew that You hear Me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it. And what follows. 1. What I have often said, I will now say, that Christ looks not so much to His own honor as to our salvation; not how He may utter some sublime saying, but how something able to draw us to Him. On which account His sublime and mighty sayings are few, and those also hidden, but the humble and lowly are many, and abound through His discourses.

For since by these men were the rather brought over, in these He continues; and He does not on the one hand utter these universally, lest the men that should come after should receive damage, nor, on the other hand, does He entirely withhold those, lest the men of that time should be offended. Since they who have passed from lowmindedness unto perfection, will be able from even a single sublime doctrine to discern the whole, but those who were ever lowminded, unless they had often heard these lowly sayings, would not have come to Him at all.

In fact, even after so many such sayings they do not remain firm, but even stone and persecute Him, and try to kill Him, and call Him blasphemer. And when He makes Himself equal with God, they say, This man blasphemes Matthew 9:3; and when He says, Your sins be forgiven you John 10:20, they moreover call Him a demoniac. So when He says that the man who hears His words is stronger than death, or, I am in the Father and the Father in Me John 8:51, they leave Him; and again, they are offended when He says

that He came down from heaven. c. vi. 33, 60 If now they could not bear these sayings, though seldom uttered, scarcely, had His discourse been always sublime, had it been of this texture, would they have given heed to Him?

When therefore He says, As the Father commanded Me, so I speak John 14:31; and, I am not come of Myself John 7:28, then they believe. That they did believe then is clear, from the Evangelist signifying this besides, and saying, As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. John 5:30 If then lowly speaking drew men to faith, and high speaking scared them away, must it not be a mark of extreme folly not to see at a glance how to reckon the sole reason of those lowly sayings, namely, that they were uttered because of the hearers.

Since in another place when He had desired to say some high thing, He withheld it, adding this reason, and saying, Lest we should offend them, cast a hook into the sea. Matthew 17:27 Which also He does here; for after saying, I know that You hear Me always, He adds, but because of the multitude which stands around I said it, that they might believe. Are these words ours? Is this a human conjecture? When then a man will not endure to be persuaded by what is written, that they were offended at sublime things, how, when he hears Christ saying that He spoke in a lowly manner that they might not be offended, how, after that, shall he suspect that the mean sayings belonged to His nature, not to His condescension?

So in another place, when a voice came down from heaven, He said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. John 12:30 He who is exalted may be allowed to speak lowly things of himself, but it is not lawful for the humble to utter concerning himself anything grand or sublime. For the former arises from condescension, and has for its cause the weakness of the hearers; or rather (it has for its cause) the leading them to humblemindedness, and His being clothed in flesh, and the teaching the hearers to say nothing great concerning themselves, and His being deemed an enemy of God, and not being believed to have come from God, His being suspected of breaking the Law, and the fact that the hearers looked on Him with an evil eye, and were ill disposed towards Him, because He said that He was equal to God.

But that a lowly man should say any great thing of Himself, has no cause either reasonable or unreasonable; it can only be folly, impudence, and unpardonable boldness. Wherefore then does Christ speak humbly, being of that ineffable and great Substance? For the reasons mentioned, and that He might not be deemed unbegotten; for Paul seems to have feared some such thing as this; wherefore he says, Except Him who did put all things under Him. 1 Corinthians 15:27 This it is impious even to think of.

Since if being less than Him who begot Him, and of a different Substance, He had been deemed equal, would He not have used every means that this might not be thought? But now He does the contrary, saying, If I do not the works of Him that sent Me, believe Me not. John 10:37 Indeed His saying, that I am in the Father and the Father in Me John 14:10, intimates to us the equality. It would have behooved, if He had been inferior, to refute this opinion with much vehemence, and not at all to have said, I am in the Father and the Father in me John 10:30, or that, We are One, or that, He that has seen Me, has seen the Father.

John 14:9 Thus also, when His discourse was concerning power, He said, I and the Father are One; and when His discourse was concerning authority, He said again, For as the Father raises up the dead and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will John 5:21; which it would be impossible that He should do were He of a different substance; or even allowing that it were possible, yet it would not have behooved to say this, lest they should suspect that the substance was one and the same.

Since if in order that they may not suppose Him to be an enemy of God, He often even utters words unsuited to Him, much more should He then have done so; but now, His saying, That they should honor the Son even as they honor the Father John 5:23; His saying, The works which He does, I do also John 5:19; His saying that He is the Resurrection, and the Life, and the Light of the world c. xi. 25; 100:viii. 12, are the expressions of One making Himself equal to Him who begot Him, and confirming the suspicion which they entertained.

Do you see how He makes this speech and defense, to show that He broke not the Law, and that He not only does not remove, but even confirms the opinion of His equality with the Father? So also when they said, Thou blasphemest, because you make yourself God John 10:33, from equality of works He established this thing.

2. And why say I that the Son did this, when the Father also who took not the flesh does the same thing? For He also endured that many lowly things should be said concerning Him for the salvation of the hearers. For the, Adam, where are you? Genesis 3:9, and, That I may know whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it Genesis 18:21; and, Now I know that you fear God Genesis 22:12; and, If they will hear Ezekiel 3:11; and, If they will understand Deuteronomy 5:29; and, Who shall give the heart of this people to be so? and the expression, There is none like You among the gods, O Lord Psalm 80:29; these and many other like sentences in the Old Testament, if a man should pick them out, he will find to be unworthy of the dignity of God. In the case of Ahab it is said, Who shall entice Ahab for Me? 2 Chronicles 18:19 And the continually preferring Himself to the gods of the heathen in the way of comparison, all these things are unworthy of God. Yet in another way they are made worthy of Him, for He is so kind, that for our salvation He cares not for expressions which become His dignity. Indeed, the becoming man is unworthy of Him, and the taking the form of a servant, and the speaking humble words, and the being clothed in humble (garments), unworthy if one looks to His dignity, but worthy if one consider the unspeakable riches of His lovingkindness. And there is another cause of the humility of His words. What is that? It is that they knew and confessed the Father, but Him they knew not. Wherefore He continually betakes Himself to the Father as being confessed by them, because He Himself was not as yet deemed worthy of credit; not on account of any inferiority of His own, but because of the folly and infirmity of the hearers. On this account He prays, and says, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. For if He quickens whom He will, and quickens in like manner as does the Father, wherefore does He call upon Him?

But it is time now to go through the passage from the beginning. Then they took up the stone where the dead man lay. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I knew that You hear Me always, but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they might believe that You have sent Me. Let us then ask the heretic, Did He receive an impulse from the prayer, and so raise the dead man? How then did He work other miracles without prayer? Saying, Thou evil spirit, I charge you, come out of him Mark 9:25; and, I will, be thou clean Mark 1:41; and, Arise, take up your bed John 5:8; and, Your sins be forgiven you Matthew 9:2; and to the sea, Peace, be still. Mark 4:39 In short, what has He more than the Apostles, if so be that He also works by prayer? Or rather I should say, that neither did they work all with prayer, but often they wrought without prayer, calling upon the Name of Jesus. Now, if His Name had such great power, how could He have needed prayer? Had He needed prayer, His Name would not have availed. When He wholly made man, what manner of prayer did He need? Was there not then great equality of honor? Let Us make, It says, man. Genesis 1:26 What could be greater sign of weakness, if He needed prayer? But let us see what the prayer was; I thank You that

You have heard Me. Who now ever prayed in this manner? Before uttering any prayer, He says, I thank You, showing that He needed not prayer. doest all things, whatsoever I will, He saith. "}"--> And I knew that You hear Me always. This He said not as though He Himself were powerless, but to show that His will and the Father's is one. But why did He assume the form of prayer? Hear, not me, but Himself, saying, For the sake of the people which stand by, that they may believe that You have sent Me. He said not, "That they may believe that I am inferior, that I have need of an impulse from above, that without prayer I cannot do anything; but, That You have sent Me. For all these things the prayer declares, if we take it simply. He said not, You have sent me weak, acknowledging servitude, and doing nothing of Myself; but dismissing all these things, that you may have no such suspicions, He puts the real cause of the prayer, That they may not deem Me an enemy of God; that they may not say, He is not of God, that I may show them that the work has been done according to Your will. All but saying, Had I been an enemy of God, what is done would not have succeeded, but the, You heard Me, is said in the case of friends and equals. And I knew that You hear Me always, that is, in order that My will be done I need no prayer, except to persuade men that to You and Me belongs one will. Why then prayest Thou? For the sake of the weak and grosser sort.

John 11:43

And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice.

Why said He not, In the name of My Father come forth? Or why said He not, Father, raise him up? Why did he omit all these expressions, and after assuming the attitude of one praying, show by His actions His independent authority? Because this also was a part of His wisdom, to show condescension by words, but by His deeds, power. For since they had nothing else to charge Him with except that He was not of God, and since in this way they deceived many, He on this account most abundantly proves this very point by what He says, and in the way that their infirmity required. For it was in His power by other means to show at once His agreement with the Father and His own dignity, but the multitude could not ascend so far. And He says,

John 11:43

Lazarus, come forth. 3. This is that of which He spoke, The hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. John 5:28 For, that you might not think that He received the power of working from another, He taught you this before, and gave proof by deeds, and said not, Arise, but, Come forth, conversing with the dead man as though living. What can be equal to this authority? And if He does it not by His own strength, what shall He have more than the Apostles, who say, Why look ye so earnestly on us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Acts 3:12 For if, not working by His own power, He did not add what the Apostles said concerning themselves, they will in a manner be more truly wise than He, because they refused the glory. And in another place, Why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions as you. Acts 14:15 The Apostles since they did nothing of themselves, spoke in this way to persuade men of this; but He when the like opinion was formed concerning Him, would He not have removed the suspicion, if at least He did not act by His own authority?

Who would assert this? But in truth Christ does the contrary, when He says, Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they might believe; so that had they believed, there would have been no need of prayer. Now if prayer were not beneath His dignity, why should He account them the cause of His praying? Why said He not, I do it in order that they may believe that I am not equal to You; for He ought on

account of the suspicion to have come to this point. When He was suspected of breaking the Law, He used the very expression, even when they had not said anything, Think not that I have come to destroy the Law Matthew 5:17; but in this place He establishes their suspicion.

In fact, what need was there at all of going such a round, and of using such dark sayings? It had been enough to say, I am not equal, and to be rid of the matter. But what, says some one, did He not say that, I do not My own will? Even this He did in a covert way, and one suited to their infirmity, and from the same cause through which the prayer was made. But what means That You have heard Me? It means, That there is nothing on My part opposed to You. As then the, That You have heard Me, is not the saying of one declaring, that of Himself He had not the power, (for were this the case, it would be not only impotence but ignorance, if before praying He did not know that God would grant the prayer; and if He knew not, how was it that He said, I go that I may awake him, instead of, I go to pray My Father to awake him?)

As then this expression is a sign, not of weakness, but of identity of will, so also is the, You hear Me always. We must then either say this, or else that it was addressed to their suspicions. If now He was neither ignorant nor weak, it is clear that He utters these lowly words, that you may be persuaded by their very excess, and may be compelled to confess, that they suit not His dignity, but are from condescension. What then say the enemies of truth? He spoke not those words, You have heard me, says some one, to the infirmity of the hearers, but in order to show a superiority.

Yet this was not to show a superiority, but to humble Himself greatly, and to show Himself as having nothing more than man. For to pray is not proper to God, nor to the sharer of the Throne. Do you see then that He came to this from no other cause than their unbelief? Observe at least that the action bears witness to His authority.

He called, and the dead man came forth wrapped. Then that the matter might not seem to be an appearance, (for his coming forth bound did not seem to be less marvelous than his resurrection,) Jesus commanded to loose him, in order that having touched and having been near him, they might see that it was really he. And He says,

John 11:43

Let him go.

Do you see His freedom from boastfulness? He does not lead him on, nor bid him go about with Him, lest He should seem to any to be showing him; so well knew He how to observe moderation.

When the sign had been wrought, some wondered, others went and told it to the Pharisees. What then did they? When they ought to have been astonished and to have admired Him, they took counsel to kill Him who had raised the dead. What folly! They thought to give up to death Him who had overcome death in the bodies of others.

John 11:47

And they said, What do we? For this man does many miracles.

They still call Him man, these who had received such proof of His divinity. What do we? They ought to have believed, and served, and bowed down to Him, and no longer to have deemed Him a man.

If we let him thus alone, the Romans will come, and will take away both our nation and city.

What is it which they counsel to do? They wish to stir up the people, as though they themselves would be in danger on suspicion of establishing a kingdom. For if, says one of them, the Romans learn that this Man is leading the multitudes, they will suspect us, and will come and destroy our city. Wherefore, tell me? Did He teach revolt? Did He not permit you to give tribute to C<sup>æ</sup>sar? Did not ye wish to make Him a king, and He fly from you? Did He not follow a mean and unpretending life, having neither house nor anything else of the kind? They therefore said this, not from any such expectation, but from malice. Yet it so fell out contrary to their expectation, and the Romans took their nation and city when they had slain Christ. For the things done by Him were beyond all suspicion. For He who healed the sick, and taught the most excellent way of life, and commanded men to obey their rulers, was not establishing but undoing a tyranny. But, says some one, we conjecture from former (impostors). But they taught revolt, He the contrary. Do you see that the words were but a pretense? For what action of the kind did He exhibit? Did He lead about with Him pompous guards? Had He a train of chariots? Did He not seek the deserts? But they, that they may not seem to be speaking from their own ill feeling, say that all the city is in danger, that the common good is being plotted against, and that they have to fear the worst. These were not the causes of your captivity, but things contrary to them; both of this last, and of the Babylonish, and of that under Antiochus which followed: it was not that there were worshipers among you, but that there were among you those who did unjustly, and excited God to wrath, this caused you to be given up into bondage. But such a thing is envy, allowing men to see nothing which they ought to see, when it has once for all blinded the soul. Did He not teach men to be meek? Did He not bid them when smitten on the right cheek to turn the other also? Did He not bid them when injured to bear it? To show greater readiness to endure evil, than others have to inflict it? Are these, tell me, the signs of one establishing a tyranny, and not rather of one pulling a tyranny down?

4. But, as I said, a dreadful thing is malice, and full of hypocrisy; this has filled the world with ten thousand evils; through this malady the law courts are filled, from this comes the desire of fame and wealth, from this the love of rule, and insolence, through this the roads have wicked robbers and the sea pirates, from this proceed the murders through the world, through this our race is rent asunder, and whatever evil you may see, you will perceive to arise from this. This has even burst into the churches, this has caused ten thousand dreadful things from the beginning, this is the mother of avarice, this malady has turned all things upside down, and corrupted justice. For gifts, It says, blind the eyes of the wise, and as a muzzle on the mouth turn away reproofs. Sirach 20:29, Septuagint. and marg. of E.V. This makes slaves of freemen, concerning this we talk every day, and no good comes of it, we become worse than wild beasts; we plunder orphans, strip widows, do wrong to the poor, join woe to woe. Alas! That the righteous has perished from the earth! Micah 7:1-2 It is our part too henceforth to mourn, or rather we have need to say this every day. We profit nothing by our prayers, nothing by our advice and exhortation, it remains therefore that we weep. Thus did Christ; after having many times exhorted those in Jerusalem, when they profited nothing, He wept at their hardness. This also do the Prophets, and this let us do now. Henceforth is the season for mourning and tears and wailing; it is seasonable for us also to say now, Call for the mourning women, and send for the cunning women, that they may cry aloud Jeremiah 9:17; perhaps thus we shall be able to cast out the malady of those who build splendid houses, of those who surround themselves with lands gotten by rapine. It is seasonable to mourn; but do ye take part with me in the mourning, you who have been stripped and injured, by your mournings bring down my tears. But while

mourning we will mourn, not for ourselves but for them; they have not injured you, but they have destroyed themselves; for you have the Kingdom of heaven in return for the injustice done you, they hell in return for their gain. On this account it is better to be injured than to injure. Let us bewail them with a lamentation not of man's making, but that from the Holy Scriptures with which the Prophets also wailed. With Isaiah let us wail bitterly, and say, Woe, they that add house to house, that lay field to field, that they may take somewhat from their neighbor; will you dwell alone upon the earth? Great houses and fair, and there shall be no inhabitants in them. Isaiah 5:8-9

Let us mourn with Nahum, and say with him, Woe to him that builds his house on high. Perhaps Jeremiah 22:13 Or rather let us mourn for them as Christ mourned for those of old. Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Luke 6:24 Let us, I beseech you, not cease thus lamenting, and if it be not unseemly, let us even beat our breasts for the carelessness of our brethren. Let us not weep for him who is already dead, but let us weep for the rapacious man, the grasping, the covetous, the insatiable. Why should we mourn for the dead, in whose case it is impossible henceforth to effect anything? Let us mourn for these who are capable even of change. But while we are lamenting, perhaps they will laugh. Even this is a worthy cause for lamentation, that they laugh when they ought to mourn. For had they been at all affected by our sorrows, it would have behooved us to cease from sorrowing on account of their promise of amendment; but since they are of an insensible disposition, let us continue to weep, not merely for the rich, but for the lovers of money, the greedy, the rapacious. Wealth is not an evil thing, (for we may use it rightly when we spend it upon those who have need,) but greediness is an evil, and it prepares deathless punishments. Let us then bewail them; perhaps there will be some amendment; or even if they who have fallen in do not escape, others at least will not fall into the danger, but will guard against it. May it come to pass that both they may be freed from their malady, and that none of us may ever fall into it, that we all may in common obtain the promised goods, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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