

John 11:49-12:8

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon highlights the dangers of loving money and the importance of prioritizing our relationship with God.

Topics: "Greed And Materialism", "Eternal Rewards"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the consequences of greed and the love of money, highlighting how it blinds individuals to their conscience, relationships, and even their own salvation. He uses examples from the Bible, such as Judas, Ananias, and the corrupt Jewish rulers, to illustrate the destructive power of greed. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of contentment, honest labor, and not coveting what belongs to others, urging his listeners to focus on eternal rewards rather than temporary wealth and possessions.

Transcript

And one of them, Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said to them, You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not, etc.

1. The heathen are stuck fast in the destruction which they made; in the trap which they hid is their foot taken. Psalm 9:15, Septuagint This has been the case with the Jews. They said that they would kill Jesus, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation; and when they had killed Him, these things happened unto them, and when they had done that by doing which they thought to escape, they yet did not escape. He who was slain is in Heaven, and they who slew have for their portion hell. Yet they did not consider these things; but what? They desired, It says, from that day forth to kill Him John 11:53, for they said, The Romans will come, and will take away our nation; and a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being High Priest that year, said, (being more shameless than the rest,) You know nothing. What the others made matter of doubt, and put forth in the way of deliberation, this man cried aloud, shamelessly, openly, audaciously. For what says he? You know nothing, nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die, and that the whole nation perish not.

John 11:51

And this spoke he not of himself, but being High Priest he prophesied.

Do you see how great is the force of the High Priest's authority? Or, since he had in any wise been deemed worthy of the High Priesthood, although unworthy thereof, he prophesied, not knowing what he said; and the grace merely made use of his mouth, but touched not his accursed heart. Indeed many others have foretold things to come, although unworthy to do so, as Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Balaam; and the reason of all is evident. But what he says is of this kind. You still sit quiet, you give heed but carelessly to this matter, and know not how to despise one man's safety for the sake of the community. See how great is the power of the Spirit; from an evil imagination It was able to bring forth words full of marvelous prophecy. The Evangelist calls the Gentiles children of God, from what was about to be: as also Christ Himself says, Other sheep I have John 10:16, so calling them from what should afterwards come to pass.

But what is, being High Priest that year? This matter as well as the rest had become corrupt; for from the time that offices became matters of purchase, they were no longer priests for the whole period of their lives, but for a year. Notwithstanding, even in this state of things the Spirit was still present. But when they lifted up their hands against Christ, then It left them, and removed to the Apostles. This the rending of the veil declared, and the voice of Christ which said, Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Matthew 23:38 And Josephus, who lived a short time after, says, that certain Angels who yet remained with them, (to see) if they would alter their ways, left them. While the vineyard stood, all things went on; but when they had slain the Heir, no longer so, but they perished. And God having taken it from the Jews, as a glorious garment from an unprofitable son, gave it to right-minded servants of the Gentiles, leaving the others desolate and naked. It was, moreover, no small thing that even an enemy should prophesy this. This might draw over others also. For in respect of his will, matters fell out contrariwise, since, when He died, the faithful were on this account delivered from the punishment to come. What means, That He might gather together those near and those afar off John 11:52? He made them one Body. The dweller in Rome deems the Indians a member of himself. What is equal to this gathering together? And the Head of all is Christ.

John 11:53

From that day forth the Jews took counsel to put Him to death.

And, in truth, had sought to do so before; for the Evangelist says, Therefore the Jews sought to kill Him John 5:18; and, Why do you seek to kill Me? John 7:19 But then they only sought, now they ratified their determination, and treated the action as their business.

John 11:54

But Jesus walked no more openly in Jewry.

2. Again He saves Himself in a human manner, and this He does continually. But I have mentioned the reason for which He often departed and withdrew. And at this time He dwelt in Ephratah, near the wilderness, and there He tarried with His disciples. How do you think that those disciples were confounded when they beheld Him saving Himself after the manner of a man? After this no man followed Him. For since the Feast was near, all were running to Jerusalem; but they, at a time when all others were rejoicing and holding solemn assembly, hide themselves, and are in danger. Yet still they tarried with Him. For they hid themselves in Galilee, at the time of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles; and after this again during the Feast, they only of all were with their Master in flight and concealment, manifesting their good will to Him. Hence Luke records that He said, I abode with you in temptations; and this He said, showing

that they were strengthened by His influence.

John 11:55

And many went up from the country to purify themselves.

John 11:57

And the High Priests and Pharisees had commanded that they should lay hands on Him.

A marvelous purification, with a murderous will, with homicidal intentions, and bloodstained hands!

John 11:56

And they said, Think ye that he will not come to the feast?

By means of the Passover they plotted against Him, and made the time of feasting a time of murder, that is, He there would fall into their hands, because the season summoned Him. What impiety! When they needed greater carefulness, and to forgive those who had been taken for the worst offenses, then they attempted to ensnare One who had done no wrong. Yet by acting thus they had already not only profited nothing, but become ridiculous. For this end coming among them continually He escapes, and restrains them when they take counsel to kill Him, and makes them to be in perplexity, desiring to prick them by the display of His power; that when they took Him, they might know that what had been done was done, not by their power, but by His permission. For not even at that time could they take Him, and this though Bethany was near; and when they did take Him, He cast them backwards.

John 12:1-2

Then six days before the Passover He came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, and feasted with them; and Martha served, but Lazarus sat at meat.

This was a proof of the genuineness of his resurrection, that after many days he both lived and ate. And Martha ministered; whence it is clear that the meal was in her house, for they received Jesus as loving and beloved. Some, however, say, that it took place in the house of another. Mary did not minister, for she was a disciple. Here again she acted in the more spiritual manner. For she did not minister as being invited, nor did she afford her services to all alike. But she directs the honor to Him alone, and approaches Him not as a man, but as a God. On this account she poured out the ointment, and wiped (His feet) with the hairs of her head, which was the action of one who did not entertain the same opinion concerning Him as did others; yet Judas rebuked her, under the pretense forsooth of carefulness. What then says Christ? She has done a good work for My burying. But why did He not expose the disciple in the case of the woman, nor say to him what the Evangelist has declared, that on account of his own thieving he rebuked her? In His abundant longsuffering He wished to bring him to a better mind. For because He knew that he was a traitor, He from the beginning often rebuked him, saying, Not all believe, and, One of you is a devil. John 6:64 He showed them that He knew him to be a traitor, yet He did not openly rebuke him, but bare with him, desiring to recall him. How then says another Evangelist, that all the disciples used these words? Matthew 26:70 All used them, and so did he, but the others not with like purpose. And if any one ask why He put the bag of the poor in the hands of a thief, and made him steward who was a lover of money, we would reply, that God knows the secret reason; but that, if we may say something by conjecture, it was that He might cut off from him all excuse. For he could not say that he did this thing from love of money,

(for he had in the bag sufficient to allay his desire,) but from excessive wickedness which Christ wished to restrain, using much condescension towards him. Wherefore He did not even rebuke him as stealing, although aware of it, stopping the way to his wicked desire, and taking from him all excuse. Let her alone, He says, for against the day of My burying has she done this. Again, He makes mention of the traitor in speaking of His burial. But him the reproof reaches not, nor does the expression soften him, though sufficient to inspire him with pity: as if He had said, I am burdensome and troublesome, but wait a little while, and I shall depart. This too he intended in saying,

John 12:8

But Me you have not always.

But none of these things turned back that savage madman; yet in truth Jesus said and did far more than this, He washed his feet that night, made him a sharer in the table and the salt, a thing which is wont to restrain even the souls of robbers, and spoke other words, enough to melt a stone, and this, not long before, but on the very day, in order that not even time might cause it to be forgotten. But he stood out against all.

3. For a dreadful, a dreadful thing is the love of money, it disables both eyes and ears, and makes men worse to deal with than a wild beast, allowing a man to consider neither conscience, nor friendship, nor fellowship, nor the salvation of his own soul, but having withdrawn them at once from all these things, like some harsh mistress, it makes those captured by it its slaves. And the dreadful part of so bitter a slavery is, that it persuades them even to be grateful for it; and the more they become enslaved, the more does their pleasure increase; and in this way especially the malady becomes incurable, in this way the monster becomes hard to conquer. This made Gehazi a leper instead of a disciple and a prophet; this destroyed Ananias and her with him; this made Judas a traitor; this corrupted the rulers of the Jews, who received gifts, and became the partners of thieves. This has brought in ten thousand wars, filling the ways with blood, the cities with wailings and lamentations. This has made meals to become impure, and tables accursed, and has filled food with transgression; therefore has Paul called it idolatry: Colossians 3:5, and not even so has he deterred men from it. And why calls he it idolatry? Many possess wealth, and dare not use it, but consecrate it, handing it down untouched, not daring to touch it, as though it were some dedicated thing. And if at any time they are forced to do so, they feel as though they had done something unlawful. Besides, as the Greek carefully tends his graven image, so thou entrusts your gold to doors and bars; providing a chest instead of a shrine, and laying it up in silver vessels. But thou dost not bow down to it as he to the image? Yet you show all kind of attention to it.

Again, he would rather give up his eyes or his life than his graven image. So also would those who love gold. But, says one, I worship not the gold. Neither does he, he says, worship the image, but the devil that dwells in it; and in like manner thou, though thou worship not the gold, yet you worship that devil who springs on your soul, from the sight of the gold and your lust for it. For more grievous than an evil spirit is the lust of money-loving, and many obey it more than others do idols.

For these last in many things disobey, but in this case they yield everything, and whatever it tells them to do, they obey. What says it? Be at war with all, it says, at enmity with all, know not nature, despise God, sacrifice to me yourself, and in all they obey. To the graven images they sacrifice oxen and sheep, but avarice says, Sacrifice to me your own soul, and the man obeys. Do you see what kind of altars it has, what kind of sacrifices it receives? The covetous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, but not even so do

they fear. 1 Corinthians 6:10 Yet this desire is weaker than all the others, it is not inborn, nor natural, (for then it would have been placed in us at the beginning;) but there was no gold at the beginning, and no man desired gold.

But if you will, I will tell you whence the mischief entered. By each man's envying the one before him, men have increased the disease, and he who has gotten in advance provokes him who had no desire. For when men see splendid houses, and extensive lands, and troops of slaves, and silver vessels, and great heaps of apparel, they use every means to outdo them; so that the first set of men are causes of the second, and these of those who come after. Now if they would be sober-minded, they would not be teachers (of evil) to others; yet neither have these any excuse.

For others there are also who despise riches. And who, says one, despises them? For the terrible thing is, that, because wickedness is so general, this seems to have become impossible, and it is not even believed that one can act aright. Shall I then mention many both in cities and in the mountains? And what would it avail? You will not from their example become better. Besides, our discourse has not now this purpose, that you should empty yourselves of your substance: I would that you could do so; however, since the burden is too heavy for you, I constrain you not; only I advise you that you desire not what belongs to others, that you impart somewhat of your own.

Many such we shall find, contented with what belongs to them, taking care of their own, and living on honest labor. Why do we not rival and imitate these? Let us think of those who have gone before us. Do not their possessions stand, preserving nothing but their name; such an one's bath, such an one's suburban seat and lodging? Do we not, when we behold them, straightway groan, when we consider what toil he endured, what rapine committed? And now he is nowhere seen, but others luxuriate in his possessions, men whom he never expected would do so, perhaps even his enemies, while he is suffering extremest punishment.

These things await us also; for we shall certainly die, and shall certainly have to submit to the same end. How much wrath, tell me, how much expense, how many enmities these men incurred; and what the gain? Deathless punishment, and the having no consolation; and the being not only while alive, but when gone, accused by all? What? When we see the images of the many laid up in their houses, shall we not weep the more? Of a truth well said the Prophet, Verily, every man living disquiets himself in vain Psalm 39:11, Septuagint; for anxiety about such things is indeed disquiet, disquiet and superfluous trouble.

But it is not so in the everlasting mansions, not so in those tabernacles. Here one has labored, and another enjoys; but there each shall possess his own labors, and shall receive a manifold reward. Let us press forward to get that possession, there let us prepare for ourselves houses, that we may rest in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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