

John 1:41-42

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of human companionship, the significance of names, and the call to live virtuous lives and use our wealth wisely as Christians.

Scripture: Psalm 133:1, Matthew 12:24, Matthew 16:17, Mark 3:17, Luke 9:58, John 1:42, John 4:18, John 15:1, 1 Corinthians 3:23, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Discipleship"

Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of companionship and unity among believers, highlighting the benefits of dwelling together in love and mutual support as opposed to isolation. He delves into the significance of Andrew's immediate sharing of the good news about Jesus with his brother Simon, showcasing the eagerness and zeal in spreading the message of Christ. Chrysostom also discusses the gradual revelation of Jesus' divinity through prophecies and the power of naming individuals in the Bible, such as Simon being called Cephas. Furthermore, he reflects on the honor and responsibility of being called Christians, urging believers to live up to the dignity of the title by imitating Christ in their actions and attitudes towards wealth and possessions.

Transcript

He first finds his own brother Simon, and says unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.

1. When God in the beginning made man, He did not allow him to be alone, but gave him woman for a helpmate, and made them to dwell together, knowing that great advantage would result from this companionship. What though the woman did not rightly employ this benefit? Still if any one make himself fully acquainted with the nature of the matter, he will see, that to the wise great advantage arises from this dwelling together; not in the cause of wife or husband only, but if brothers do this, they also shall enjoy the benefit. Wherefore the Prophet has said, What is good, what is pleasant, but that brethren should dwell together? Psalm 133:1, Septuagint And Paul exhorted not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Hebrews 10:25 In this it is that we differ from beasts, for this we have built cities, and markets, and houses, that we may be united one with another, not in the place of our dwelling only, but by the bond of love. For since our nature came imperfect from Him who made it, and is not self-sufficient, God, for our advantage, ordained that the want hence existing should be corrected by the assistance arising from mutual intercourse; so that what was lacking in one should be supplied by another, and the defective

nature thus be rendered self-sufficient; as, for instance, that though made mortal, it should by succession for a long time maintain immortality. I might have gone into this argument at greater length, to show what advantages arise to those who come together from genuine and pure intercourse with each other: but there is another thing which presses now, that on account of which we have made these remarks.

Andrew, after having tarried with Jesus and learned what He did, kept not the treasure to himself, but hastens and runs quickly to his brother, to impart to him of the good things which he had received. But wherefore has not John said on what matters Christ conversed with them? Whence is it clear that it was for this that they abode with Him? It was proved by us the other day; but we may learn it from what has been read today as well. Observe what Andrew says to his brother; We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. You see how, as far as he had learned in a short time, he showed the wisdom of the teacher who persuaded them, and their own zeal, who cared for these things long ago, and from the beginning. For this word, we have found, is the expression of a soul which travails for His presence, and looks for His coming from above, and is made overjoyed when the looked-for thing has happened, and hastens to impart to others the good tidings. This is the part of brotherly affection, of natural friendship, of a sincere disposition, to be eager to stretch out the hand to each other in spiritual things. Hear him besides speak with the addition of the article; for he does not say Messias, but the Messias; thus they were expecting some one Christ, having nothing in common with the others. And behold, I beg of you, the mind of Peter obedient and tractable from the very beginning; he ran to Him without any delay; He brought him, says St. John, to Jesus. Yet let no one blame his easy temper if he received the word without much questioning, because it is probable that his brother had told him these things more exactly and at length; but the Evangelists from their care for conciseness constantly cut many things short. Besides, it is not said absolutely that he believed, but that he brought him to Jesus, to give him up for the future to Him, so that from Him he might learn all; for the other disciple also was with him, and contributed to this. And if John the Baptist, when he had said that He was the Lamb, and that He baptized with the Spirit, gave them over to learn the clearer doctrine concerning this thing from Him, much more would Andrew have done this, not deeming him self sufficient to declare the whole, but drawing him to the very fount of light with so much zeal and joy, that the other neither deferred nor delayed at all.

John 1:42

And when Jesus beheld him, He said, 'You are Simon, the son of Jonas; you shall be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.'

2. He begins from this time forth to reveal the things belonging to His Divinity, and to open It out little by little by predictions. So He did in the case of Nathaniel and the Samaritan woman. For prophecies bring men over not less than miracles; and are free from the appearance of boasting. Miracles may possibly be slandered among foolish men, He casts out devils, said they, by Beelzebub Matthew 12:24, but nothing of the kind has ever been said of prophecy. Now in the case of Nathaniel and Simon He used this method of teaching, but with Andrew and Philip He did not so. Why was this? Because those (two) had the testimony of John, no small preparation, and Philip received a credible evidence of faith, when he saw those who had been present.

You are Simon, the son of Jonas. By the present, the future is guaranteed; for it is clear that He who named Peter's father foreknew the future also. And the prediction is attended with praise; but the object was not to flatter, but to foretell something future. Hear at least in the case of the Samaritan woman, how He utters a prediction with severe reproofs; You have had, he says, five husbands, and he whom thou

now hast is not your husband. John 4:18 So also His Father makes great account of prophecy, when He sets Himself against the honor paid to idols: Let them declare to you, says He, what shall come upon you Isaiah 47:13; and again, I have declared, and have saved, and there was no foreign God among you Isaiah 43:12, Septuagint; and He brings this forward through all prophecy. Because prophecy is especially the work of God, which devils cannot even imitate, though they strive exceedingly. For in the case of miracles there may be delusion; but exactly to foretell the future belongs to that pure Nature alone. Or if devils ever have done so, it was by deceiving the simpler sort; whence their oracles are always easily detected.

But Peter makes no reply to these words; as yet he knew nothing clearly, but still was learning. And observe, that not even the prediction is fully set forth; for Jesus did not say, I will change your name to Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, but, You shall be called Cephas. The former speech would have expressed too great authority and power; for Christ does not immediately nor at first declare all His power, but speaks for a while in a humbler tone; and so, when He had given the proof of His Divinity, He puts it more authoritatively, saying, Blessed are you, Simon, because My Father has revealed it to you; and again, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church. Matthew 16:17-18 Him therefore He so named, and James and his brother He called sons of thunder. Mark 3:17 Why then does He this? To show that it was He who gave the old covenant, that it was He who altered names, who called Abram Abraham, and Sarai Sarah, and Jacob Israel. To many he assigned names even from their birth, as to Isaac, and Samson, and to those in Isaiah and Hosea Isaiah 8:3; Hosea 1:4-9; but to others He gave them after they had been named by their parents, as to those we have mentioned, and to Joshua the Son of Nun. It was also a custom of the Ancients to give names from things, which in fact Leah also has done; and this takes place not without cause, but in order that men may have the appellation to remind them of the goodness of God, that a perpetual memory of the prophecy conveyed by the names may sound in the ears of those who receive it. Thus too He named John early, because they whose virtue was to shine forth from their early youth, from that time received their names; while to those who were to become great at a later period, the title also was given later.

3. But then they received each a different name, we now have all one name, that which is greater than any, being called Christians, and sons of God, and (His) friends, and (His) Body. For the very term itself is able more than all those others to rouse us, and make us more zealous for the practice of virtue. Let us not then act unworthily of the honor belonging to the title, considering the excess of our dignity, we who are called Christ's; for so Paul has named us. Let us bear in mind and respect the grandeur of the appellation. 1 Corinthians 3:23 For if one who is said to be descended from some famous general, or one otherwise distinguished, is proud to be called this or that man's son, and deems the name a great honor, and strives in every way so as not to affix, by remissness of his own, reproach to him after whom he is called; shall not we who are called after the name, not of a general, nor any of the princes upon earth, nor Angel, nor Archangel, nor Seraphim, but of the King of these Himself, shall not we freely give even our very life, so as not to insult Him who has honored us? Do you not know what honor the royal bands of shield-bearers and spearmen that are about the king enjoy? So let us who have been deemed worthy to be near Him, and much closer, and as much nearer than those just named, as the body is closer to the head than they, let us, I say, use every means to be imitators of Christ.

What then says Christ? The foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head. Luke 9:58 Now if I demand this of you, it will seem perhaps to most of you grievous and burdensome; because therefore of your infirmity I speak not of such perfection, but desire you not to

be nailed to riches; and as I, because of the infirmity of the many, retire somewhat from (demanding) the excess of virtue, I desire that you do so and much more on the side of vice. I blame not those who have houses, and lands, and wealth, and servants, but wish them to possess these things in a safe and becoming way. And what is a becoming way? As masters, not as slaves; so that they rule them, be not ruled by them; that they use, not abuse them. This is why they are called, things to be used, that we may employ them on necessary services, not hoard them up; this is a domestic's office, that a master's; it is for the slave to keep them, but for the lord and one who has great authority to expend. You did not receive your wealth to bury, but to distribute. Had God desired riches to be hoarded, He would not have given them to men, but would have let them remain as they were in the earth; but because He wishes them to be spent, therefore He has permitted us to have them, that we may impart them to each other. And if we keep them to ourselves, we are no longer masters of them. But if you wish to make them greater and therefore keep them shut up, even in this case the best plan of all is to scatter and distribute them in all directions; because there can be no revenue without an outlay, no wealth without expenditure. One may see that it is so even in worldly matters. So it is with the merchant, so with the husbandman, who put forth the one his wealth, the other his seed; the one sails the sea to disperse his wares, the other labors all the year putting in and tending his seed. But here there is no need of any one of these things, neither to equip a vessel, nor to yoke oxen, nor to plough land, nor to be anxious about uncertain weather, nor to dread a fall of hail; here are neither waves nor rocks; this voyage and this sowing needs one thing only, that we cast forth our possessions; all the rest will that Husbandman do, of whom Christ says, My Father is the Husbandman. John 15:1 Is it not then absurd to be sluggish and slothful where we may gain all without labor, and where there are many toils and many troubles and cares, and after all, an uncertain hope, there to display all eagerness? Let us not, I beseech you, let us not be to such a degree senseless about our own salvation, but let us leave the more troublesome task, and run to that which is most easy and more profitable, that we may obtain also the good things that are to come; through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the Holy and quickening Spirit be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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