

John 1:6

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on John 1:6 highlights the essential role of John the Baptist as a divine messenger who prepares the way for Christ and emphasizes the importance of living a life of faith and good works.

Scripture: Matthew 3:15, Matthew 25:46, John 1:7-8, John 5:32, John 5:34, 1 Corinthians 10:31

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Humility"

Description

John Chrysostom delves into the significance of John the Baptist as the messenger sent from God to bear witness to the Light, emphasizing that John's role was not to add to the trustworthiness of Jesus but to lead others to believe through his testimony. Chrysostom explains that John's humility in accepting his role as a herald was for the salvation of many, as it made the faith in Jesus more accessible and understandable to the people. He urges the listeners to not only have faith and knowledge but also to live a pure and righteous life, as good works are essential for salvation and to avoid eternal punishment.

Transcript

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1. Having in the introduction spoken to us things of urgent importance concerning God the Word, (the Evangelist) proceeding on his road, and in order, afterwards comes to the herald of the Word, his namesake John. And now that you hear that he was sent from God, do not for the future imagine that any of the words spoken by him are mere man's words; for all that he utters is not his own, but is of Him who sent him. Wherefore he is called messenger Malachi 3:1, for the excellence of a messenger is, that he say nothing of his own. But the expression was, in this place is not significative of his coming into existence, but refers to his office of messenger; for 'there was' a man sent from God, is used instead of a man 'was sent' from God.

How then do some say, that the expression, being in the form of God Philippians 2:6 is not used of His invariable likeness to the Father, because no article is added? For observe, that the article is nowhere added here. Are these words then not spoken of the Father? What then shall we say to the prophet who says, that, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way Malachi 3:1, as found in Mark 1:2? For the expressions My and Your declare two Persons.

John 1:7

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of that Light.

What is this, perhaps one may say, the servant bear witness to his Master? When then you see Him not only witnessed to by His servant, but even coming to him, and with Jews baptized by him, will you not be still more astonished and perplexed? Yet you ought not to be troubled nor confused, but amazed at such unspeakable goodness. Though if any still continue bewildered and confused, He will say to such an one what He said to John, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness Matthew 3:15; and, if any be still further troubled, again He will say to him too what he said to the Jews, But I receive not testimony from man. John 5:34 If now he needs not this witness, why was John sent from God? Not as though He required his testimony -- this were extremest blasphemy. Why then? John himself informs us, when he says,

That all men through him might believe.

And Christ also, after having said that I receive not testimony from man John 5:34, in order that He may not seem to the foolish to clash with Himself, by declaring at one time There is another that bears witness of Me and I know that his witness is true John 5:32 (for He pointed to John;) and at another, I receive not testimony from man John 5:34; He immediately adds the solution of the doubt, But these things I say for your own sake, that you might be saved. As though He had said, that I am God, and the really-Begotten Son of God, and am of that Simple and Blessed Essence, I need none to witness to Me; and even though none would do so, yet am not I by this anything diminished in My Essence; but because I care for the salvation of the many, I have descended to such humility as to commit the witness of Me to a man. For by reason of the groveling nature and infirmity of the Jews, the faith in Him would in this way be more easily received, and more palatable. As then He clothed Himself with flesh, that he might not, by encountering men with the unveiled Godhead, destroy them all; so He sent forth a man for His herald, that those who heard might at the hearing of a kindred voice approach more readily. For (to prove) that He had no need of that (herald's) testimony, it would have sufficed that He should only have shown Himself who He was in His unveiled Essence, and have confounded them all. But this He did not for the reason I have before mentioned. He would have annihilated all, since none could have endured the encounter of that unapproachable light. Wherefore, as I said, He put on flesh, and entrusted the witness (of Himself) to one of our fellow-servants, since He arranged all for the salvation of men, looking not only to His own honor, but also to what might be readily received by, and be profitable to, His hearers. Which He glanced at when He said, These things I say for your sake, that you might be saved. John 5:34 And the Evangelist using the same language as his Master, after saying, to bear witness of that Light, adds,

That all men through Him might believe. All but saying, Think not that the reason why John the Baptist came to bear witness, was that he might add anything to the trustworthiness of his Master. No; (He came,) that by his means beings of his own class might believe. For it is clear from what follows, that he used this expression in his anxiety to remove this suspicion beforehand, since he adds,

John 1:8

He was not that Light.

Now if he did not introduce this as setting himself against this suspicion, then the expression is absolutely superfluous, and tautology rather than elucidation of his teaching. For why, after having said that he was sent to bear witness of that Light, does he again say, He was not that Light? (He says it,) not loosely or without reason; but, because, for the most part, among ourselves, the person witnessing is held to be

greater, and generally more trustworthy than the person witnessed of; therefore, that none might suspect this in the case of John, at once from the very beginning he removes this evil suspicion, and having torn it up by the roots, shows who this is that bears witness, and who is He who is witnessed of, and what an interval there is between the witnessed of, and the bearer of witness. And after having done this, and shown His incomparable superiority, he afterwards proceeds fearlessly to the narrative which remains; and after carefully removing whatever strange (ideas) might secretly harbor in the minds of the simpler sort, so instills into all easily and without impediment the word of doctrine in its proper order.

Let us pray then, that henceforth with the revelation of these thoughts and rightness of doctrine, we may have also a pure life and bright conversation, since these things profit nothing unless good works be present with us. For though we have all faith and all knowledge of the Scriptures, yet if we be naked and destitute of the protection derived from (holy) living, there is nothing to hinder us from being hurried into the fire of hell, and burning for ever in the unquenchable flame. For as they who have done good shall rise to life everlasting, so they who have dared the contrary shall rise to everlasting punishment, which never has an end. Let us then manifest all eagerness not to mar the gain which accrues to us from a right faith by the vileness of our actions, but becoming well-pleasing to Him by these also, boldly to look on Christ. No happiness can be equal to this. And may it come to pass, that we all having obtained what has been mentioned, may do all to the glory of God; to whom, with the Only-Begotten Son and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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