

John 17:1-5

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on John 17:1-5 emphasizes the glorification of God through Jesus' actions and the call to eternal life through knowing Him.

Scripture: John 17:4

Topics: "Glorifying God", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the importance of glorifying God through our actions, emphasizing the significance of enduring evil and seeking refuge in prayer. He highlights Jesus' willingness to be glorified through the Cross, showing that true wisdom is proven through works. Chrysostom explains that Jesus' prayer signifies His unity with the Father and His authority over all, extending salvation to all nations. He challenges believers to prioritize spiritual growth over material possessions, urging them to seek eternal life through humility and selflessness.

Transcript

These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and says, Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.

1. He that has done and taught, it says, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven. And with much reason; for to show true wisdom in words, is easy, but the proof which is by works is the part of some noble and great one. Wherefore also Christ, speaking of the endurance of evil, puts Himself forth, bidding us take example from Him. On this account too, after this admonition, He betakes Himself to prayer, teaching us in our temptations to leave all things, and flee to God. For because He had said, In the world you shall have tribulation, and had shaken their souls, by the prayer He raises them again. As yet they gave heed unto Him as to a man; and for their sake He acts thus, just as He did in the case of Lazarus, and there tells the reason; Because of the people that stand by I said it, that they might believe that You have sent Me. John 11:42 Yea, says some one, this took place with good cause in the case of the Jews; but wherefore in that of the disciples? With good cause in the case of the disciples also. For they who, after all that had been said and done, said, Now we know that You know John 16:30, most of all needed to be established. Besides, the Evangelist does not even call the action prayer; but what says he? He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and says rather that it was a discoursing with the Father. And if elsewhere he speaks of prayer, and at one time shows Him kneeling on His knees, at another lifting His eyes to heaven, be not thou troubled; for by these means we are taught the earnestness which should be in our

petitions, that standing we should look up, not with the eyes of the flesh only, but of the mind, and that we should bend our knees, bruising our own hearts. For Christ came not merely to manifest Himself, but also about to teach virtue ineffable. But it behooves the teacher to teach, not by words only, but also by actions. Let us hear then what He says in this place.

Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.

Again He shows us, that not unwilling He comes to the Cross. For how could He be unwilling, who prayed that this might come to pass, and called the action glory, not only for Himself the Crucified, but also for the Father? Since this was the case, for not the Son only, but the Father also was glorified. For before the Crucifixion, not even the Jews knew Him; Israel, it says, has not known Me Isaiah 1:3; but after the Crucifixion, all the world ran to Him. Then He speaks also of the manner of the glory, and how He will glorify Him.

John 17:2

As You have given Him power over all flesh, that nothing which You have given Him should perish.

For to be always doing good, is glory to God. But what is, As You have given Him power over all flesh? He now shows, that what belongs to the preaching is not confined to the Jews alone, but is extended to all the world, and lays down beforehand the first invitations to the Gentiles. And since He had said, Go not into the way of the Gentiles Matthew 10:5, and after this time is about to say, Go, and make disciples of all nations Matthew 28:19, He shows that the Father also wills this. For this greatly offended the Jews, and the disciples too; nor indeed after this did they easily endure to lay hold on the Gentiles, until they received the teaching of the Spirit; because hence arose no small stumblingblock for the Jews. Therefore, when Peter after such a manifestation of the Spirit came to Jerusalem, he could scarcely, by relating the vision of the sheet, escape the charges brought against him. But what is, You have given Him power over all flesh? I will ask the heretics, When did He receive this power? Was it before He formed them, or after? He himself says, that it was after that He had been crucified, and had risen again; at least then He said, All power is given unto Me Matthew 28:18, and, Go and make disciples of all nations. What then, had He not authority over His own works? Did He make them, and had He not authority over them after having made them? Yet He is seen doing all in times of old, punishing some as sinners, (for, Surely I will not hide, it says, from My servant Abraham, that which I am about to do Genesis 18:17, Septuagint) and honoring others as righteous. Had He then the power at that time, and now had He lost it, and did He again receive it? What devil could assert this? But if His power was the same both then and now, (for, says He, as the Father raises up the dead and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will John 5:21) what is the meaning of the words? He was about to send them to the Gentiles; in order therefore that they might not think that this was an innovation, because He had said, I am not sent, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel Matthew 15:24, He shows that this seems good to the Father also. And if He says this with great meanness of circumstance, it is not wonderful. For so He edified both those at that time, and those who came afterwards; and as I have before said, He always by the excess of meanness firmly persuaded them that the words were those of condescension.

2. But what is, Of all flesh? For certainly not all believed. Yet, for His part, all believed; and if men gave no heed to His words, the fault was not in the teacher, but in those who received them not.

That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

If here also He speaks in a more human manner, wonder not. For He does so both on account of the reasons I have given, and to avoid the saying anything great concerning Himself; since this was a stumblingblock to the hearers because as yet they imagined nothing great concerning Him. John, for example, when He speaks in his own person, does not so, but leads up his language to greater sublimity, saying, All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made c. i. 3, 4, 9, 11; and that He was Life; and that He was Light; and that He came to His own: he says not, that He would not have had power, had He not received it, but that He gave to others also power to become sons of God. And Paul in like manner calls Him equal with God. But He Himself asks in a more human way, saying thus, That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. Philippians 2:6

John 17:3

And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

The only true God, He says, by way of distinction from those which are not gods; for He was about to send them to the Gentiles. But if they will not allow this, but on account of this word only reject the Son from being true God, in this way as they proceed they reject Him from being God at all. For He also says, You seek not the glory which is from the only God. John 5:44 Well then; shall not the Son be God? But if the Son be God, and the Son of the Father who is called the Only God, it is clear that He also is true, and the Son of Him who is called the Only true God. Why, when Paul says, Or I only and Barnabas 1 Corinthians 9:6, does he exclude Barnabas? Not at all; for the only is put by way of distinction from others. And, if He be not true God, how is He Truth? For truth far surpasses what is true. What shall we call the not being a true man, tell me? Shall we not call it the not being a man at all? So if the Son is not true God, how is He God? And how makes He us gods and sons, if He is not true? But on these matters we have spoken more particularly in another place; wherefore let us apply ourselves to what follows.

John 17:4

I have glorified You on the earth. Well said He, on the earth; for in heaven He had been already glorified, having His own natural glory, and being worshipped by the Angels. Christ then speaks not of that glory which is bound up with His Essence, (for that glory, though none glorify Him, He ever possesses in its fullness,) but of that which comes from the service of men. And so the, Glorify Me, is of this kind; and that you may understand that He speaks of this manner of glory, hear what follows.

I have finished the work which You gave Me that I should do it.

And yet the action was still but beginning, or rather was not yet beginning. How then said He, I have finished? Either He means, that I have done all My part; or He speaks of the future, as having already come to pass; or, which one may say most of all, that all was already effected, because the root of blessings had been laid, which fruits would certainly and necessarily follow, and from His being present at and assisting in those things which should take place after these. On this account He says again in a condescending way, Which You gave Me. For had He indeed waited to hear and learn, this would have fallen far short of His glory. For that He came to this of His own will, is clear from many passages. As when Paul says, that He so loved us, as to give Himself for us Ephesians 5:2; and, He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant Philippians 2:7; and, As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.

John 15:9

John 17:5

And now, O Father, glorify Me with Your Own Self, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Where is that glory? For allowing that He was with reason unhonored among men, because of the covering which was put around Him; how seeks He class="greek">seekest Thou. "}-> to be glorified with the Father? What then says He here? The saying refers to the Dispensation; since His fleshly nature had not yet been glorified, not having as yet enjoyed incorruption, nor shared the kingly throne. Therefore He said not on earth, but with You.

3. This glory we also shall enjoy according to our measure, if we be sober. Wherefore Paul says, If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:17 Ten thousand tears then do they merit, who through sluggishness and sleep plot against themselves when such glory is set before them; and, were there no hell, they would be more wretched than any, who, when it is in their power to reign and to be glorified with the Son of God, deprive themselves of so great blessings.

Since if it were necessary to be cut in pieces, if to die ten thousand deaths, if to give up every day ten thousand lives and as many bodies, ought we not to submit to such things for such glory? But now we do not even despise money, which hereafter, though unwilling, we shall leave: we do not despise money, which brings about us ten thousand mischiefs, which remains here, which is not our own. For we are but stewards of that which is not our own, although we receive it from our fathers.

But when there is hell besides, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, and the gnashing of teeth, how, tell me, shall we bear these things? How long will we refuse to see clearly, and spend our all on daily fightings, and contentions, and unprofitable talk, feeding, cultivating earth, fattening the body and neglecting the soul, making no account of necessary things, but much care about things superfluous and unprofitable? And we build splendid tombs, and buy costly houses, and draw about with us herds of all kinds of servants, and devise different stewards, appointing managers of lands, of houses, of money, and managers of those managers; but as to our desolate soul, we care nothing for that.

And what will be the limit to this? Is it not one belly that we fill, is it not one body that we clothe? What is this great bustle of business? Why and wherefore do we cut up and tear to pieces the one soul, which we have had assigned to us, in attending to the service of such things, contriving for ourselves a grievous slavery? For he who needs many things is the slave of many things, although he seem to be their master. Since the lord is the slave even of his domestics, and brings in another and a heavier mode of service; and in another way also he is their slave, not daring without them to enter the agora, nor the bath, nor the field, but they frequently go about in all directions without him.

He who seems to be master, dares not, if his slaves be not present, to go forth from home, and if while unattended he do but put his head out of his house, he thinks that he is laughed at. Perhaps some laugh at us when we say this, yet on this very account they would be deserving of ten thousand tears. For to show that this is slavery, I would gladly ask you, would you wish to need some one to put the morsel to your mouth, and to apply the cup to your lips? Would you not deem such a service worthy of tears?

What if you required continually supporters to enable you to walk, would you not think yourself pitiable, and in this respect more wretched than any? So then you ought to be disposed now. For it matters nothing whether one is so treated by irrational things, or by men.

Why, tell me, do not the Angels differ from us in this respect, that they do not want so many things as we do? Therefore the less we need, the more we are on our way to them; the more we need, the more we sink down to this perishable life. And that you may learn that these things are so, ask those who have grown old which life they deem happiest, that when they were helplessly mastered, or now when they are masters of these things? We have mentioned these persons, because those who are intoxicated with youth, do not even know the excess of their slavery.

For what of those in fever, do they call themselves happy when, thirsting much, they drink much and need more, or when, having recovered their health, they are free from the desire? Do you see that in every instance the needing much is pitiable, and far apart from true wisdom, and an aggravation of slavery and desire? Why then do we voluntarily increase to ourselves wretchedness? For, tell me, if it were possible to live uninjured without roof or walls, would you not prefer this; wherefore then do you increase the signs of your weakness?

Do we not for this call Adam happy, that he needed nothing, no house, no clothes? Yes, says some one, but now we are in need of them. Why then do we make our need greater? If many persons curtail many of the things actually needed, (servants, I mean, and houses, and money,) what excuse can we have if we overstep the need? The more you put about you, the more slavish do you become; for by whatever proportion you require more, in that proportion you have trenched upon your freedom.

For absolute freedom is, to want nothing at all; the next is, to want little; and this the Angels and their imitators especially possess. But for men to succeed in this while tarrying in a mortal body, think how great praise this has. This also Paul said, when writing to the Corinthians, But I spare you, and, lest such should have trouble in the flesh. 1 Corinthians 7:28 Riches are called usables, that we may use them rightly, and not keep and bury them; for this is not to possess them, but to be possessed by them.

Since if we are going to make this our aim how to multiply them, not that we may employ them rightly, the order is reversed, and they possess us, not we them. Let us then free ourselves from this grievous bondage, and at last become free. Why do we devise ten thousand different chains for ourselves? Is not the bond of nature enough for you, and the necessity of life, and the crowd of ten thousand affairs, but do you twine also other nets for yourself, and put them about your feet?

And when will you lay hold on heaven, and be able to stand on that height? For a great thing, a great thing is it, that even having cut asunder all these cords, you should be able to lay hold on the city which is above. So many other hindrances are there; all which that we may conquer, let us keep to the mean estate [and having put away superfluities, let us keep to what is necessary.] Thus shall we lay hold on eternal life, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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