

John 18:37-19:15

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of imitating Christ's example of longsuffering and love, and the consequences of rejecting Him, while also highlighting the need for spiritual preparation and a life of love and service to others.

Scripture: Ezekiel 14:14, Matthew 25:9, Matthew 27:63, Luke 6:25, Luke 12:47, Luke 16:26, John 15:22, John 18:38-39, John 19:1, John 19:4, John 19:6-7, John 19:10, John 19:12

Topics: "Christ's Humility", "Suffering And Forgiveness"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the humility and endurance of Jesus during His trial before Pilate, highlighting how Jesus exhibited gentleness, mildness, and silence in the face of false accusations and mockery, ultimately showing His kingship and truth. Despite Pilate's attempts to release Him, the crowd demanded His crucifixion, revealing their rejection of the true King. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of imitating Christ's response to insults and injustice, showing love and forgiveness even to enemies, as Jesus did. He urges the congregation to reflect on Christ's suffering and to live a life of virtue and humility, seeking wisdom from the Scriptures and preparing for the journey to eternal life.

Transcript

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears My Voice.

1. A marvelous thing is longsuffering; it places the soul as in a quiet harbor, fleeing it from tossings and evil spirits. And this everywhere Christ has taught us, but especially now, when He is judged, and dragged, and led about. For when He was brought to Annas, He answered with great gentleness, and, to the servant who smote Him, said what had power to bring down all his insolence; thence having gone to Caiaphas, then to Pilate, and having spent the whole night in these scenes, He all through exhibits His own mildness; and when they said that He was a malefactor, and were not able to prove it, He stood silent; but when He was questioned concerning the Kingdom, then He spoke to Pilate, instructing him, and leading him in to higher matters. But why was it that Pilate made the enquiry not in their presence, but apart, having gone into the judgment hall? He suspected something great respecting Him, and wished, without being troubled by the Jews, to learn all accurately. Then when he said, What have you done? on this point Jesus made no answer; but concerning that of which Pilate most desired to hear, namely, His Kingdom, He answered, saying, My Kingdom is not of this world. That is, I am indeed a King, yet not such an one as you suspect, but far more glorious, declaring by these words and those which follow, that no evil

had been done by Him. For one who says, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth, shows, that no evil has been done by Him. Then when He says, Every one that is of the truth hears My voice, He draws him on by these means, and persuades him to become a listener to the words. For if, says He, any one is true, and desires these things, he will certainly hear Me. And, in fact, He so took him by these short words, that he said,

John 18:38

What is truth?

But for the present he applies himself to what was pressing, for he knew that this question needed time, and desired to rescue Him from the violence of the Jews. Wherefore he went out, and what said he?

I find no fault in him.

Consider how prudently he acted. He said not, Since he has sinned, and is deserving of death, forgive him on account of the Feast; but having first acquitted Him of all guilt, he asks them over and above, if they were not minded to dismiss Him as innocent, yet as guilty to forgive Him on account of the time. Wherefore he added,

John 18:39-40

You have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover; then in a persuasory way, Will ye therefore that I release the king of the Jews? Then cried they all, Not this man, but Barabbas.

O accursed decision! They demand those like mannered with themselves, and let the guilty go; but bid him punish the innocent. For this was their longstanding custom. But do thou all through observe the lovingkindness of the Lord in these circumstances. Pilate scourged Him John 19:1 perhaps desiring to exhaust and to soothe the fury of the Jews. For when he had not been able to deliver Him by his former measures, being anxious to stay the evil at this point, he scourged Him, and permitted to be done what was done, the robe and crown to be put on Him, so as to relax their anger. Wherefore also he led Him forth to them crowned John 19:5, that, seeing the insult which had been done to Him, they might recover a little from their passion, and vomit their venom. And how would the soldiers have done this, had it not been the command of their ruler? To gratify the Jews. Since it was not by his command that they at first went in by night, but to please the Jews; they dared anything for money. But He, when so many and such things were done, yet stood silent, as He had done during the enquiry, and answered nothing. And do thou not merely hear these things, but keep them continually in your mind, and when you behold the King of the world and of all Angels, mocked of the soldiers, by words and by actions, and bearing all silently, do thou imitate Him by deeds yourself. For when Pilate had called Him the King of the Jews, and they now put about Him the apparel of mockery, then Pilate having led Him out, said,

John 19:4-5

I find no fault against him. He therefore went forth, wearing the crown.

But not even so was their rage quenched, but they cried out,

John 19:6

Crucify him, crucify him.

Then Pilate, seeing that all was done in vain, said,

Take ye him, and crucify him.

Whence it is clear that he had permitted what had been done before, because of their madness.

For I, he says, find no fault in him.

2. See in how many ways the judge makes His defense, continually acquitting Him of the charges; but none of these things shamed the dogs from their purpose. For the, Take ye him and crucify him, is the expression of one clearing himself of the guilt, and thrusting them forward to an action not permitted to them. They therefore had brought Him, in order that the thing might be done by the decision of the governor; but the contrary fell out, that He was rather acquitted than condemned by the governor's decision. Then, because they were ashamed,

John 19:7

We have, they said, a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

How then when the judge said, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to your law,' did ye reply, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,' while here ye fly to the law? And consider the charge, 'He made himself the Son of God.' Tell me, is this a ground of accusation, that He who performed the deeds of the Son of God should call Himself the Son of God? What then does Christ? While they held this dialogue one with the other, He held His peace, fulfilling that saying of the Prophet, that He opens not his mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away. Isaiah 53:7-8, Septuagint

Then Pilate is alarmed when he hears from them, that He made Himself the Son of God, and dreads lest the assertion may possibly be true, and he should seem to transgress; but these men who had learned this, both by His deeds and words, did not shudder, but are putting Him to death for the very reasons for which they ought to have worshipped Him. On this account he no more asks Him, What have you done? but, shaken by fear, he begins the enquiry again, saying, Are you the Christ? But He answered not. For he who had heard, To this end was I born, and for this came I, and, My Kingdom is not of this world, he, when he ought to have opposed His enemies and delivered Him, did not so, but seconded the fury of the Jews. Then they being in every way silenced, make their cry issue in a political charge, saying, He that makes himself a king, speaks against C^Aisar. John 19:12 Pilate ought therefore to have accurately enquired, whether He had aimed at sovereignty, and set His hand to expel C^Aisar from the kingdom. But he makes not an exact enquiry, and therefore Christ answered him nothing, because He knew that he asked all the questions idly. Besides, since His works bore witness to Him, He would not prevail by word, nor compose any defense, showing that He came voluntarily to this condition. When He was silent, Pilate says,

John 19:10

Do you not know that I have power to crucify you? Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? "N.T.}-->

Do you see how he condemned himself beforehand; for, if the whole rests with you, why dost not thou let Him go, when you have found no fault in Him? When then Pilate had uttered the sentence against himself, then He says,

John 19:11

He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.

Showing that he also was guilty of sin. Then, to pull down his pride and arrogance, He says,

You would have no power except it were given you.

Showing that this did not come to pass merely in the common order of events, but that it was accomplished mystically. Then lest, when you hear, Except it were given you, you should deem that Pilate was exempt from all blame, on this account therefore He said, Therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin. And yet if it was given, neither he nor they were liable to any charge. Thou objectest idly; for the 'given' in this place means what is 'allowed'; as though He had said, 'He has permitted these things to be, yet not for that are you clear of the wickedness.' He awed Pilate by the words, and proffered a clear defense. On which account that person sought to release Him; but they again cried out, saying,

John 19:12

If thou let this man go, you are not CÃsar's friend.

For when they profited nothing by bringing charges drawn from their own law, they wickedly betook themselves to external laws, saying,

Every one that makes himself a king speaks against CÃsar.

And where has this Man appeared as a tyrant? Whence can you prove it? By the purple robe? By the diadem? By the dress? By the soldiers? Did not He ever walk unattended, save by His twelve disciples, following in every point a humble mode of living, both as to food, and clothing, and habitation? But O what shamelessness and ill-time cowardice! For Pilate, deeming that he should now incur some danger were he to overlook these words, comes forth as though to enquire into the matter, (for the sitting down showed this,) but without making any enquiry, he gave Him up to them, thinking to shame them. For to prove that he did it for this purpose, hear what he says.

John 19:14-15

Behold your king! But when they said, Crucify him, he added again, Shall I crucify your king? But they cried out, We have no king but CÃsar.

Of their own will they subjected themselves to punishment; therefore also God gave them up, because they were the first to cast themselves out from His providence and superintendence; and since with one voice they rejected His sovereignty, He allowed them to fall by their own suffrages. Still what had been said should have been sufficient to calm their passion, but they feared, lest, being let go, He should again draw the multitudes, and they did all they could to prevent this. For a dreadful thing is love of rule, dreadful and able to destroy the soul; it was on account of this that they had never heard Him. And yet Pilate, in consequence of a few words, desired to let Him go, but they pressed on, saying, Crucify him. And why did they strive to kill Him in this manner? It was a shameful death. Fearing therefore lest there should afterwards be any remembrance of Him, they desired to bring Him to the accursed punishment, not knowing that truth is exalted by hindrances. To prove that they had this suspicion, listen to what they say; We have heard that that deceiver said, After three days I will rise again Matthew 27:63; on this account

they made all this stir, turning things upside down, that they might ruin matters in after time. And the ill-ordered people, corrupted by their rulers, cried out continually, Crucify him!

3. But let us not merely read of these things, but bear them in our mind; the crown of thorns, the robe, the reed, the blows, the smiting on the cheek, the spittings, the irony. These things, if continually meditated on, are sufficient to take down all anger; and if we be mocked at, if we suffer injustice, let us still say, The servant is not greater than his Lord John 13:16; and let us bring forward the words of the Jews, which they uttered in their madness, saying, You are a Samaritan, and hast a devil John 8:48; and, He casts out devils by Beelzebub.

Luke 11:15 For on this account He bare all these things, in order that we might walk in His footsteps, and endure those mockings which disturb more than any other kind of reproach. Yet nevertheless He not only bare these things, but even used every means to save and deliver from the appointed punishment those who did them. For He sent the Apostles also for their salvation, at least you hear them saying, that, We know that through ignorance you did it Acts 3:17; and by these means drawing them to repentance.

This let us also imitate; for nothing so much makes God propitious as the loving enemies, and doing good to those who despitefully use us. When a man insults you, look not to him, but to the devil who moves him, and against him empty all your wrath, but pity the man who is moved by him. For if lying is from the devil, to be angry without a cause is much more so. When you see one turning another into ridicule, consider that it is the devil who moves him, for mockings belong not to Christians.

For he who has been bidden to mourn, and has heard, Woe, you that laugh Luke 6:25, and who after this insults, and jests, and is excited, demands not reproach from us, but sorrow, since Christ also was troubled when He thought on Judas. All these things therefore let us practice in our actions, for if we act not rightly in these, we have come to no purpose and in vain into the world. Or rather we have come to our harm, for faith is not sufficient to bring men to the Kingdom, nay, it even has power in this way most to condemn those who exhibit an ill life; for He which knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes Luke 12:47; and again, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.

John 15:22 What excuse then shall we have, who have been set within the palace, and deemed worthy to stoop down and enter into the sanctuary, and have been made partakers of the releasing Mysteries, and who yet are worse than the Greeks, who have shared in none of these things? For if they for the sake of vainglory have shown so much true wisdom, much more ought we to go after all virtue, because it is pleasing to God. But at present we do not even despise wealth; while they have often been careless of their life, and in wars have given up their children to their madness about devils, and have despised nature for the sake of their devils, but we do not even despise money for the sake of Christ, nor anger on account of God's will, but are inflamed, and in no better state than the fevered.

And just as they, when possessed by their malady, are all burning, so we, suffocated as by some fire, can stop at no point of desire, increasing both anger and avarice. On this account I am ashamed and astonished, when I behold among the Greeks men despising riches, but all mad among ourselves. For even if we could find some despising riches, we should find that they have been made captive by other vices, by passion or envy; and a hard thing it is to discover true wisdom without a blemish.

But the reason is, that we are not earnest to get our remedies from the Scriptures, nor do we apply ourselves to those Scriptures with compunction, and sorrow, and groaning, but carelessly, if at any time we chance to be at leisure. Therefore when a great rush of worldly matters comes, it overwhelms all; and if

there has been any profit, destroys it. For if a man have a wound, and after putting on a plaster, do not tie it tight, but allow it to fall off, and expose his sore to wet, and dust, and heat, and ten thousand other things able to irritate it, he will get no good; yet not by reason of the inefficacy of the remedies, but by reason of his own carelessness.

And this also is wont to happen to us, when we attend but little to the divine oracles, but give ourselves up wholly and incessantly to things of this life; for thus all the seed is choked, and all is made unfruitful. That this may not be the case, let us look carefully a little, let us look up to heaven, let us bend down to the tombs and coffins of the departed. For the same end awaits us, and the same necessity of departure will often come upon us before the evening. Prepare we then for this expedition; there is need of many supplies for the journey, for great is the heat there, and great the drought, and great the solitude.

Henceforth there is no reposing at an inn, there is no buying anything, when one has not taken all from hence. Hear at least what the virgins say, Go to them that sell Matthew 25:9; but they who went found not. Hear what Abraham says, A gulf between us and you. Luke 16:26 Hear what Ezekiel says concerning that day, that Noah, and Job, and Daniel shall in nowise deliver their sons. Ezekiel 14:14 But may it never come to pass that we hear these words, but that having taken hence sufficient provision for our way to eternal life, we may behold with boldness our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, dominion, honor, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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