

John 20:24-21:14

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and endurance in the face of tribulations and persecutions, and warns against the dangers of loving money.

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Resurrection Appearances"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the encounter between Jesus and Thomas, highlighting Thomas' initial doubt and the lovingkindness of the Lord in showing Himself with His wounds to save even the one who doubted. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of faith and belief without seeing, as Jesus blesses those who have not seen but believed. He also discusses the significance of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, showing the proof of the Resurrection and the incorruptibility of His body. Chrysostom urges the listeners to focus on heavenly treasures, avoid the love of money which leads to various sins and sorrows, and choose the eternal joy and glory that come from following Christ.

Transcript

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said, Except I shall see in His hands -- I will not believe.

1. As to believe carelessly and in a random way, comes of an over-easy temper; so to be beyond measure curious and meddlesome, marks a most gross understanding. On this account Thomas is held to blame. For he believed not the Apostles when they said, We have seen the Lord; not so much mistrusting them, as deeming the thing to be impossible, that is to say, the resurrection from the dead. Since he says not, I do not believe you, but, Except I put my hand -- I do not believe. But how was it, that when all were collected together, he alone was absent? Probably after the dispersion which had lately taken place, he had not returned even then. But do thou, when you see the unbelief of the disciple, consider the lovingkindness of the Lord, how for the sake of a single soul He showed Himself with His wounds, and comes in order to save even the one, though he was grosser than the rest; on which account indeed he sought proof from the grossest of the senses, and would not even trust his eyes. For he said not, Except I see, but, Except I handle, he says, lest what he saw might somehow be an apparition. Yet the disciples who told him these things, were at the time worthy of credit, and so was He that promised; yet, since he desired more, Christ did not deprive him even of this.

And why does He not appear to him straightway, instead of after eight days? John 20:26 In order that being in the mean time continually instructed by the disciples, and hearing the same thing, he might be inflamed to more eager desire, and be more ready to believe for the future. But whence knew he that His side had been opened? From having heard it from the disciples. How then did he believe partly, and partly not believe? Because this thing was very strange and wonderful. But observe, I pray you, the truthfulness of the disciples, how they hide no faults, either their own or others', but record them with great veracity.

Jesus again presents himself to them, and waits not to be requested by Thomas, nor to hear any such thing, but before he had spoken, Himself prevented him, and fulfilled his desire; showing that even when he spoke those words to the disciples, He was present. For He used the same words, and in a manner conveying a sharp rebuke, and instruction for the future. For having said,

John 20:26

Reach hither your finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither your hand, and thrust it into My side; He added,

And be not faithless, but believing.

Do you see that his doubt proceeded from unbelief? But it was before he had received the Spirit; after that, it was no longer so, but, for the future, they were perfected.

And not in this way only did Jesus rebuke him, but also by what follows; for when he, being fully satisfied, breathed again, and cried aloud,

John 20:28

My Lord, and my God, He says,

John 20:29

Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.

For this is of faith, to receive things not seen; since, Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1 And here He pronounces blessed not the disciples only, but those also who after them should believe. Yet, says some one, the disciples saw and believed. Yes, but they sought nothing of the kind, but from the proof of the napkins, they straightway received the word concerning the Resurrection, and before they saw the body, exhibited all faith. When therefore any one in the present day say, I would that I had lived in those times, and had seen Christ working miracles, let them reflect, that, Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.

It is worth enquiring, how an incorruptible body showed the prints of the nails, and was tangible by a mortal hand. But be not thou disturbed; what took place was a matter of condescension. For that which was so subtle and light as to enter in when the doors were shut, was free from all density ; but this marvel was shown, that the Resurrection might be believed, and that men might know that it was the Crucified One Himself, and that another rose not in His stead. On this account He arose bearing the signs of the Cross, and on this account He eats. At least the Apostles everywhere made this a sign of the Resurrection, saying, We, who ate and drank with Him. Acts 10:41 As therefore when we see Him walking

on the waves before the Crucifixion, we do not say, that that body is of a different nature, but of our own; so after the Resurrection, when we see Him with the prints of the nails, we will no more say, that he is therefore corruptible. For He exhibited these appearances on account of the disciple.

John 20:30

And many other signs truly did Jesus.

2. Since this Evangelist has mentioned fewer than the others, he tells us that neither have all the others mentioned them all, but as many as were sufficient to draw the hearers to belief. For, If, it says, they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books. John 21:25 Whence it is clear, that What they have mentioned they wrote not for display, but only for the sake of what was useful. For how could they who omitted the greater part, write these others for display? But why went they not through them all? Chiefly on account of their number; besides, they also considered, that he who believed not those they had mentioned, would not give heed to a greater number; while he who received these, would have no need of another in order to believe. And here too he seems to me to be for the time speaking of the miracles after the Resurrection. Wherefore He says,

In the presence of His disciples.

For as before the Resurrection it was necessary that many should be done, in order that they might believe that He was the Son of God, so was it also after the Resurrection, in order that they might admit that He had arisen. For another reason also he has added, In the presence of His disciples, because He conversed with them alone after the Resurrection; wherefore also He said, The world sees Me no more. John 14:19 Then, in order that you may understand that what was done was done only for the sake of the disciples, he added,

John 20:31

That believing ye might have life in His Name.

Speaking generally to mankind, and showing that not on Him who is believed on, but on ourselves, he bestows a very great favor. In His Name, that is, through Him; for He is the Life.

John 21:1

After these things, Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias.

Do you see that He remains not with them continually, nor as before? He appeared, for instance, in the evening, and flew away; then after eight days again once, and again flew away; then after these things by the sea, and again with great terror. But what is the, showed? From this it is clear that He was not seen unless He condescended, because His body was henceforth incorruptible, and of unmixed purity. But wherefore has the writer mentioned the place? To show that he had now taken away the greater part of their fear, so that they now ventured forth from their dwelling, and went about everywhere. For they were no longer shut up at home, but had gone into Galilee, avoiding the danger from the Jews. Simon, therefore, comes to fish. For since neither was He with them continually, nor was the Spirit yet given, nor they at that time yet entrusted with anything, having nothing to do, they went after their trade.

John 21:2

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, and Nathanael, (he that was called by Philip,) and the sons of Zebedee, and two others.

Having then nothing to do, they went to their fishing, and this same they did by night, because they were greatly afraid. This Luke also mentions; but this is not the same occasion, but a different one. And the other disciples followed, because they were henceforth bound to one another, and at the same time desired to see the fishing, and to bestow their leisure well. As they then were laboring and wearied, Jesus presents Himself before them, and does not at once reveal Himself, so that they enter into converse with Him. He therefore says to them,

John 21:5

Have ye any meat ?

For a time He speaks rather after a human manner, as if about to buy somewhat of them. But when they made signs that they had none, He bade them cast their nets to the right; and on casting they obtained a haul. But when they recognized Him, the disciples Peter and John again exhibited the peculiarities of their several tempers. The one was more fervent, the other more lofty; the one more keen, the other more clear-sighted. On this account John first recognized Jesus, Peter first came to Him. For no ordinary signs were they which had taken place. What were they? First, that so many fish were caught; then, that the net did not break; then, that before they landed, the coals had been found, and fish laid thereon, and bread. For He no longer made things out of matter already subsisting, as, through a certain dispensation, He did before the Crucifixion. When therefore Peter knew Him, he threw down all, both fish and nets, and girded himself. Do you see his respect and love? Yet they were only two hundred cubits off; but not even so could Peter wait to go to Him in the boat, but reached the shore by swimming. What then does Jesus?

John 21:12

Come, He says, dine. And none of them dared ask Him.

For they no longer had the same boldness, nor were they so confident, nor did they now approach Him with speech, but with silence and great fear and reverence, sat down giving heed to Him.

For they knew that it was the Lord.

And therefore they did not ask Him, Who are You? But seeing that His form was altered, and full of much awfulness, they were greatly amazed, and desired to ask somewhat concerning it; but fear, and their knowledge that He was not some other, but the Same, checked the enquiry, and they only ate what He created for them with a greater exertion of power than before. For here He no more looks to heaven, nor performs those human acts, showing that those also which He did were done by way of condescension. And to show that He remained not with them continually, nor in like manner as before, It says that,

John 21:14

This was the third time that Jesus appeared to them, after that He arose from the dead.

And He bids them to bring of the fish, to show that what they saw was no appearance. But here indeed it says not that He ate with them, but Luke, in another place, says that He did; for He was eating together with them. Acts 1:4 But the, how, it is not ours to say; for these things came to pass in too strange a

manner, not as though His nature now needed food, but from an act of condescension, in proof of the Resurrection.

3. Perhaps when you heard these things, you glowed, and called those happy who were then with Him, and those who shall be with Him at the day of the general Resurrection. Let us then use every exertion that we may see that admirable Face. For if when now we hear we so burn, and desire to have been in those days which He spent upon earth, and to have heard His Voice, and seen His face, and to have approached, and touched, and ministered unto Him; consider how great a thing it is to see Him no longer in a mortal body, nor doing human actions, but with a body guard of Angels, being ourselves also in a form of unmixed purity, and beholding Him, and enjoying the rest of that bliss which passes all language.

Wherefore, I entreat, let us use every means, so as not to miss such glory. For nothing is difficult if we be willing, nothing burdensome if we give heed. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. 2 Timothy 2:12 What then is, If we endure? If we bear tribulations, if persecutions, if we walk in the strait way. For the strait way is by its nature laborious, but by our will it is rendered light, from the hope of things to come. For our present light affliction works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 Let us then transfer our eyes to heaven, and continually imagine those things, and behold them.

For if we always spend our time with them, we shall not be moved to desire the pleasures of this world, nor find it hard to bear its sorrows; but we shall laugh at these and the like, and nothing will be able to enslave or lift us up, if only we direct our longing there, and look to that love. And why say I that we shall not grieve at present troubles? We shall henceforth not even appear to see them. Such a thing is strong desire. Those, for instance, who are not at present with us, but being absent are loved, we image every day.

For mighty is the sovereignty of love, it alienates the soul from all things else, and chains to the desired object. If thus we love Christ, all things here will seem to be a shadow, an image, a dream. We too shall say, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress? Romans 8:35 He said not, money, or wealth, or beauty, (these are very mean and contemptible,) but he has put the things which seem to be grievous, famines, persecutions, deaths. He then spat on these even, as being nought; but we for the sake of money separate ourselves from our life, and cut ourselves off from the light.

And Paul indeed prefers neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, to the love which is towards Him; but we, if we see a little portion of gold, are fired, and trample on His laws. And if these things are intolerable when spoken of, much more are they so when done. For the terrible thing is this, that we shudder to hear, but do not shudder to do: we swear readily, and perjure ourselves, and plunder, and exact usury, care nothing for sobriety, desist from exactness in prayer, transgress most of the commandments, and for the sake of money make no account of our own members.

For he that loves wealth will work ten thousand mischiefs to his neighbor, and to himself as well. He will easily be angry with him, and revile him, and call him fool, and swear and perjure himself, and does not even preserve the measures of the old law. For he that loves gold will not love his neighbor; yet we, for the Kingdom's sake, are bidden to love even our enemies. Now if by fulfilling the old commandments, we shall not be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven, unless our righteousness exceed and go beyond them, when we transgress even these, what excuse shall we obtain? He that loves money, not only will not love his enemies, but will even treat his friends as enemies.

4. But why speak I of friends? The lovers of money have often ignored nature itself. Such a one knows not kindred, remembers not companionship, reverences not age, has no friend, but will be ill-disposed towards all, and above all others to himself, not only by destroying his soul, but by racking himself with ten thousand cares, and toils, and sorrows. For he will endure foreign travels, hatreds, dangers, plots, anything whatever, only that he may have in his house the root of all evil, and may count much gold.

What then can be more grievous than this disease? It is void of any luxury or pleasure, for the sake of which men often sin, it is void of honor or glory. For the lover of money suspects that he has tens of thousands, and really has many, who accuse, and envy, and slander, and plot against him. Those whom he has wronged hate him as having been ill-used; those who have not yet suffered, fearing least they may suffer, and sympathizing with those who have, manifest the same hostility; while the greater and more powerful, being stung and indignant on account of the humbler sort, and at the same time also envying him, are his enemies and haters.

And why speak I of men? For when one has God also made his enemy, what hope shall there then be for him? What consolation? What comfort? He that loves riches will never be able to use them; he will be their slave and keeper, not their master. For, being ever anxious to make them more, he will never be willing to spend them; but he will cut short himself, and be in poorer state than any poor man, as nowhere stopping in his desire. Yet riches are made not that we should keep, but that we should use them; but if we are going to bury them for others, what can be more miserable than we, who run about desiring to get together the possessions of all men, that we may shut them up within, and cut them off from common use?

But there is another malady not less than this. Some men bury their money in the earth, others in their bellies, and in pleasure and drunkenness; together with injustice adding to themselves the punishment of wantonness. Some minister with their substance to parasites and flatterers, others to dice and harlots, others to different expenses of the same kind, cutting out for themselves ten thousand roads that lead to hell, but leaving the right and sanctioned road which leads to heaven.

And yet it has not greater gain only, but greater pleasure than the things we have mentioned. For he who gives to harlots is ridiculous and shameful, and will have many quarrels, and brief pleasure; or rather, not even brief, because, give what he will to the women his mistresses, they will not thank him for it; for, The house of a stranger is a cask with holes. Proverbs 23:27, Septuagint Besides, that sort of persons is impudent, and Solomon has compared their love to the grave; and then only do they stop, when they see their lover stripped of all.

Or rather, such a woman does not stop even then, but tricks herself out the more, and tramples on him when he is down, and excites much laughter against him, and works him so much mischief, as it is not possible even to describe by words. Not such is the pleasure of the saved; for neither has any there a rival, but all rejoice and are glad, both they that receive blessings, and they that look on. No anger, no despondency, no shame, no disgrace, besiege the soul of such a one, but great is the gladness of his conscience, and great his hope of things to come; bright his glory, and great his distinction; and more than all is the favor and safety which is from God, and not one precipice, nor suspicion, but a waveless harbor, and calm.

Considering therefore all these things, and comparing pleasure with pleasure, let us choose the better, that we may obtain the good things to come, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-2024-2114/>

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