

John 7:1-8

by St. John Chrysostom

Jesus' meekness and gentleness are exemplified in His interactions with His brethren and the world, teaching us to master our anger and show forth all meekness and gentleness.

Topics: "Christian Humility", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the dangers of envy and malice, highlighting how these negative emotions led to death entering the world. He discusses the unbelief and insolence displayed by Christ's own brethren, showing how even those close to Him struggled with doubts and accusations. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of humility, gentleness, and controlling anger, urging listeners to learn from Christ's example of meekness and lowliness of heart. He encourages the congregation to respond to insults and provocations with grace and patience, avoiding the destructive nature of wrath and striving for spiritual growth and peace.

Transcript

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

1. Nothing is worse than envy and malice; through these death entered into the world. For when the devil saw man honored, he endured not his prosperity, but used every means to destroy him. Wisdom 2:24 And from the same root one may everywhere see this same fruit produced. Thus Abel was slain; thus David, with many other just men, was like to have been so; from this also the Jews became Christ-slayers. And declaring this the Evangelist said, After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He had not power to walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. What do you say, O blessed John? Had not He power, who was able to do all that He would? He that said, Whom do you seek? John 18:6 and cast them backward? He who was present, yet not seen John 21:4, had not He power? How then afterwards did He come among them in the midst of the temple, in the midst of the feast, when there was an assembly, when they that longed for murder were present, and utter those sayings which enraged them yet the more? Yea, this at least men marveled at, saying, Is not this He, whom they seek to kill? And, lo, He speaks boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Ver. 25, 26 What mean these riddles? Away with the word! The Evangelist spoke not so that he might be supposed to utter riddles, but to make it plain that He shows proofs both of His Godhead and His Manhood. For when he says, that He had not power, he speaks of Him as a man, doing many things after the manner of men; but when he says, that He stood in the midst of them, and

they seized Him not, he shows to us the power of the Godhead, (as man He fled, as God He appeared,) and in both cases he speaks truly. To be in the midst of those who were plotting against Him, and yet not be seized by them, showed His unrivaled and irresistible nature; to yield strengthened and authenticated the Dispensation, that neither Paul of Samosata, nor Marcion, nor those affected with their maladies, might have anything to say. By this then he stops all their mouths.

After these things was the Jews' feast of tabernacles. The words, after these things, mean only, that the writer has here been concise, and has passed over a long interval of time, as is clear from this circumstance. When Christ sat on the mountain, he says, that it was the feast of the Passover; while here the writer mentions the feast of tabernacles, and during the five months has neither related or taught us anything else, except the miracle of the loaves, and the sermon made to those who ate them. Yet He ceased not to work miracles, and to converse, both in the day, and in the evening, and oftentimes at night; at least, it was thus that He presided over His disciples, as all the Evangelists tell us. Why then have they omitted that interval? Because it was impossible to recount everything fully, and moreover, because they were anxious to mention those points which were followed by any fault-finding or gainsaying of the Jews. There were many circumstances like those which here are omitted; for that He raised the dead, healed the sick, and was admired, they have frequently recorded; but when they have anything uncommon to tell, when they have to describe any charge seemingly put forth against Him, these things they set down; such as this now, that His brethren believed Him not. For a circumstance like this brings with it no slight suspicion, and it is worth our while to admire their truth-loving disposition, how they are not ashamed to relate things which seem to bring disgrace upon their Teacher, but have been even more anxious to report these than other matters. For instance, the writer having passed by many signs and wonders and sermons, has sprung at once to this.

John 7:3-5

For, says he, His brethren said to Him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that Your disciples also may see the works that You do; for there is no man that does anything in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly. Show yourself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him.

2. What unbelief, says some one, is here? They exhort Him to work miracles. It is great deed; for of unbelief come their words, and their insolence, and their unseasonable freedom of speech. For they thought, that owing to their relationship, it was lawful for them to address Him boldly. And their request seems forsooth to be that of friends, but the words were those of great maliciousness. For in this place they reproach Him with cowardice and vainglory: since to say, no man does anything in secret, is the expression of persons charging Him with cowardice, and suspecting the things done by Him as being not really done; and to add, that he seeks to be known, was to accuse Him of vainglory. But observe, I pray you, the power of Christ. Of those who said these things, one became first Bishop of Jerusalem, the blessed James, of whom Paul says, Other of the Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother ; and Judas also is said to have been a marvelous man. And yet these persons had been present also at Cana, when the wine was made, but as yet they profited nothing. Whence then had they so great unbelief? From their evil mind, and from envy; for superiority among kindred is wont somehow to be envied by such as are not alike exalted. But who are those that they call disciples here? The crowd that followed Him, not the twelve. What then says Christ? Observe how mildly He answered; He said not, Who are you that counsel and instruct Me thus? but,

John 7:6

My time is not yet come.

He here seems to me to hint at something other than He expresses; perhaps in their envy they designed to deliver Him up to the Jews; and pointing out this to them, He says, My time is not yet come, that is, the time of the Cross and the Death, why then hasten ye to slay Me before the time?

But your time is always ready.

As though He had said, Though you be ever with the Jews, they will not slay you who desire the same things with them; but Me they will straightway wish to kill. So that it is ever your time to be with them without danger, but My time is when the season of the Cross is at hand, when I must die. For that this was His meaning, He showed by what followed.

John 7:7

The world cannot hate you; (how should it hate those who desire, and who run for the same objects as itself?) but Me it hates, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

That is, because I upbraid and rebuke it, therefore I am hated. From this let us learn to master our anger, and not to give way to unworthy passion, though they be mean men who give us counsel. For if Christ meekly bore with unbelievers counseling Him, when their counsel was improper and not from any good intention, what pardon shall we obtain, who being but dust and ashes, yet are annoyed with those who counsel us, and deem that we are unworthily treated, although the persons who do this may be but a little humbler than ourselves? Observe in this instance how He repels their accusation with all gentleness; for when they say, Show Yourself to the world, He replies, The world cannot hate you, but Me the world hates; thus removing their accusation. So far, He says, am I from seeking honor from men, that I cease not to reprove them, and this when I know that by this course hatred is produced against and death prepared for Me. And where, asks some one, did He rebuke men? When did He ever cease to do so? Did He not say, Think not that I will accuse you to the Father? There is one that accuses you, even Moses. John 5:45 And again; I know you, that you have not the love of God in you: and How can you believe, who receive honor from men, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Do you see how He has everywhere shown, that it was the open rebuke, not the violation of the Sabbath, which caused the hatred against Him?

And wherefore does He send them to the feast, saying,

John 7:8

Go up to the feast: I go not up yet.

To show that He said these things not as needing them, or desiring to be flattered by them, but permitting them to do what pertained to Jews. How then, says some one, went He up after saying, 'I go not up'? He said not, once for all, I go not up, but, now, that is, not with you.

For My time is not yet fulfilled.

And yet He was about to be crucified at the coming Passover. How then went He not up also? For if He went not up because the time was not yet come, He ought not to have gone up at all. But He went not up for this purpose, that He might suffer, but that He might instruct them. But wherefore secretly? Since He

might by going openly both have been amidst them, and have restrained their unruly impulses as He often did. It was because He would not do this continually. Since had He gone up openly, and again blinded them, He would have made His Godhead to shine through in a greater degree, which at present behooved not, but He rather concealed it. And since they thought that His remaining was from cowardice, He shows them the contrary, and that it was from confidence, and a dispensation, and that knowing beforehand the time when He should suffer, He would, when it should at length be at hand, be most desirous of going up to Jerusalem. And methinks by saying, Go up, He meant, Think not that I compel you to stay with Me against your will, and this addition of, My time is not yet fully come, is the expression of one declaring that miracles must be wrought and sermons spoken, so that greater multitudes might believe, and the disciples be made more steadfast by seeing the boldness and the sufferings of their Master.

3. Learn we then, from what has been said, His kindness and gentleness; Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart Matthew 11:29; and let us cast away all bitterness. If any exalt himself against us, let us be humble; if any be bold, let us wait upon him; if any bite and devour us with mocks and jests, let us not be overcome; lest in defending ourselves we destroy ourselves. For wrath is a wild beast, a wild beast keen and angry. Let us then repeat to ourselves soothing charms drawn from the holy Scripture, and say, You are earth and ashes.

Why is earth and ashes proud? Sirach 10:9, and, The sway of his fury shall be his destruction Sirach 1:22: and, The wrathful man is not comely Proverbs 11:25, Septuagint; for there is nothing more shameful, nothing uglier than a visage inflamed with anger. As when you stir up mud there is an ill savor, so when a soul is disturbed by passion there is great indecency and unpleasantness. But, says some one, I endure not insult from mine enemies. Wherefore? Tell me. If the charge be true, then you ought, even before the affront, to have been pricked at heart, and thank your enemy for his rebukes; if it be false, despise it.

He has called you poor, laugh at him; he has called you base-born and foolish, then mourn for him; for He that says to his brother, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Matthew 5:22 Whenever therefore one insults you, consider the punishment that he undergoes; then shall you not only not be angry, but shall even shed tears for him. For no man is angry with one in a fever or inflammation, but pities and weeps for all such; and such a thing is a soul that is angry. Nay, if even thou desire to avenge yourself, hold your peace, and you have dealt your enemy a mortal blow; while if you add reviling to reviling, you have kindled a fire.

But, says some one, the bystanders accuse us of weakness if we hold our peace. No, they will not condemn your weakness, but admire you for your wisdom. Moreover, if you are stung by insolence, you become insolent; and being stung, compel men to think that what has been said of you is true. Wherefore, tell me, does a rich man laugh when he is called poor? Is it not because he is conscious that he is not poor? If therefore we will laugh at insults, we shall afford the strongest proof that we are not conscious of the faults alleged.

Besides, how long are we to dread the accounts we render to men? How long are we to despise our common Lord, and be nailed to the flesh? For whereas there is among you strife, and envying, and divisions, are you not carnal? 1 Corinthians 3:3 Let us then become spiritual, and bridle this dreadful wild beast. Anger differs nothing from madness, it is a temporary devil, or rather it is a thing worse than having a devil; for one that has a devil may be excused, but the angry man deserves ten thousand punishments, voluntarily casting himself into the pit of destruction, and before the hell which is to come suffering punishment from this already, by bringing a certain restless turmoil and never silent storm of fury, through

all the night and through all the day, upon the reasonings of his soul.

Let us therefore, that we may deliver ourselves from the punishment here and the vengeance hereafter, cast out this passion, and show forth all meekness and gentleness, that we may find rest for our souls both here and in the Kingdom of Heaven. To which may we all attain, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

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