

Homily 21 on the Statues

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's Homily 21 on the Statues emphasizes faith, mercy, and the importance of selfless leadership in overcoming trials.

Scripture: Matthew 6:12

Topics: "Divine Forgiveness", "Christian Mercy"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the reconciliation of the Emperor with the city of Antioch after the return of Bishop Flavian, highlighting the power of forgiveness, mercy, and the lovingkindness of God. He emphasizes the city's faith in seeking refuge in the Church and the Priest of God during times of danger, showcasing the importance of trust in divine aid. Chrysostom commends the Priest's sacrificial actions, wisdom, and meekness in moving the Emperor's heart to forgiveness, drawing parallels to biblical examples like Joseph and Jesus. The sermon underscores the Emperor's magnanimity in forgiving those who offended him, urging him to imitate Christ's forgiveness and mercy towards others, and the lasting impact of such actions on posterity and Christianity.

Transcript

On the return of Flavian the Bishop, and the reconciliation of the Emperor with the city, and with those who had offended in overthrowing the Statues.

1. Today, I shall begin with that very same saying with which I have ever been used to open my address to you during the season of danger, and shall say together with you, Blessed be God, Who has granted us this day to celebrate this holy Feast with much joy and gladness; and has restored the head to the body, the shepherd to the sheep, the master to the disciples, the general to the soldiers, the High Priest to the Priests! Blessed be God, Who does exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think! Ephesians 3:20 For to us it would have seemed sufficient, had we been but delivered from the hitherto impending evil; and for this we made all our supplication. But the God who loves man, and ever in His giving surpasses our prayers by an excess of bounty, has brought back our Father too, sooner than we could at all have expected. Who would, indeed, have thought that in so few days, he would have gone, and have had audience with the Emperor, and set us free from the calamity, and again come back to us so quickly, as to be able to anticipate the Holy Passover, and to celebrate it with ourselves? Behold, however, this event, which was so contrary to expectation, has been realized! We have received back our Father; and we enjoy so much the greater pleasure, inasmuch as we have received him back now beyond our hopes. For all

these things, let us give thanks to the merciful God, and be amazed at the power, the lovingkindness, the wisdom, and the tender care which has been manifested on behalf of the city. For the devil had attempted its entire subversion through the daring crimes committed; but God, by means of this same calamity, has adorned the city, the Priest, and the Emperor; and has made them all more illustrious.

2. The city has won renown, because when such a danger had overtaken her, passing by at once all those who were in power, those who were surrounded with much wealth, those who possessed great influence with the Emperor, it fled for refuge to the Church, and to the Priest of God, and with much faith, rested itself entirely upon the hope which is from above! Many indeed, after the departure of the common Father, were ready to terrify those who lay in prison, by saying, The Emperor does not lay aside his wrath, but is still more provoked, and is thinking of the utter ruin of the city. But while they were whispering all this, and much more, they who were then in bonds were not the least intimidated, but upon our saying, These things are false, and they are a device of the devil, who desires to fill you with consternation; they replied to us, We need no consolation to be addressed to us; for we know where we have taken refuge from the first; and upon what hope we have rested ourselves. We have fixed our safety upon the sacred anchor! We have not entrusted this to man, but to the Almighty God; therefore we are most assuredly confident, that the result will be favourable; for it is impossible, truly impossible, that this hope can ever be confounded! To how many crowns, how many encomiums, is this equivalent for our city? How much of God's favour will it draw down upon us too in our other affairs! For it is not, indeed it is not a thing belonging to a soul of mean order to be watchful against the attack of temptations, and to look to God; and scorning all that is human, to yearn after that Divine aid.

3. The city then has thus won renown; and the Priest again not less than the city, for he exposed his life for all; and while there were many things to hinder him, as the winter, his age, the feast, and not less than these, his sister, then at her last breath, he raised himself above all these obstacles, and did not say to himself, What a thing is this? Our only remaining sister, she who has drawn the yoke of Christ along with me, and who has been my domestic companion so long, is now at her last breath; and shall we desert her, and go hence, and not behold her expiring, and uttering her paring words? But she indeed was praying daily, that we might close her eyes, and shut and compose her mouth, and attend to all other things pertaining to the burial; but now in this case, as one deserted, and deprived of a protector, she will obtain none of these offices from her brother; of him whom she especially desired to obtain them; but when she gives up the ghost, she will not see him whom she loved more to have with her than all others? And will not this be heavier to her than dying many times over? Yes, although I were far away, would it not be right to come with speed, and do, and suffer any thing, for the purpose of showing her this kindness? And now when I am near, shall I leave her, and taking my departure abandon her? And how then will she sustain the remainder of her days?

4. Yet, so far was he from saying any of these things, that he did not even think of them; but esteeming the fear of God above all the ties of kindred, he recognized the fact, that as tempests display the pilot, and dangers the general, so also a time of trial makes the Priest to become manifest. All men, says he, are eagerly looking on us; the Jews as well as the Greeks; let us not confound the expectations which these have of us; let us not overlook so great a shipwreck; but having committed to God all things that pertain to ourselves, let us venture our life itself too! Consider, moreover, the magnanimity of the Priest, and the lovingkindness of God! All those things which he disregarded, all those he enjoyed; in order that he might both receive the reward of his readiness, and that he might obtain a greater pleasure by enjoying them contrary to expectation! He preferred to celebrate the festival in a foreign place, and far from his own

people, for the sake of the city's safety. But God restored him to us before the Paschal feast, so as to take a common part with us in the conduct of the festival; in order that he might have the reward of his choice, and enjoy the greater gladness! He feared not the season of the year; and there was summer during the whole period he was travelling. He took not his age into account; and he dispatched this long journey with just as much ease as if he had been young and sprightly! He thought not of his sister's decease nor was enervated by it, and when he returned he found her still alive, and all things which were disregarded by him, were all obtained!

5. Thus, the priest has indeed won renown both with God and man! This transaction has also adorned the Emperor with a splendour beyond the diadem! First, in that it was then made apparent that he would grant that to the priests which he would not to any other; secondly, that he granted the favour without delay, and quelled his resentment. But that you may more clearly understand the magnanimity of the Emperor, and the wisdom of the priest, and more than both these, the lovingkindness of God; allow me to relate to you a few particulars of the conference which took place. But what I am now about to relate I learned from one of those who were within the palace; for the Father has told us neither much nor little on the affair; but ever imitating the magnanimity of Paul, he hides his own good deeds; and to those who on all sides were asking him questions as to what he said to the Emperor; and how he prevailed upon him; and how he turned away his wrath entirely, he replied, We contributed nothing to the matter, but the Emperor himself (God having softened his heart), even before we had spoken, dismissed his anger, and quelled his resentment; and discoursing of the events that had taken place as if some other person had been insulted, he thus went over all the events that had happened without anger. But those things which he concealed from humility, God has brought to light.

6. And what were these? I will proceed to relate them to you by going a little farther back in the story. When he went forth from the city, leaving all in such great despondency, he endured what was far more grievous than we ourselves suffered, who were in the midst of these calamities. For, in the first place, meeting in the midst of his journey with those who had been sent by the Emperor to make inquisition upon the events which had happened; and learning from them, on what terms they were sent; and reflecting upon the dreadful events that were in store for the city, the tumults, the confusion, the flight, the terror, the agony, the perils, he wept a flood of tears, and his bowels were rent with compassion; for with fathers, it is usual to grieve much more, when they are not able to be present with their suffering children; which was just what this most tender-hearted man now endured; not only lamenting the calamities which were in reserve for us, but that he was far away from us, whilst we were enduring them. But this was, however, for our safety. For as soon as he had learned these things from them; more warmly did the fountain of his tears then gush forth, and he betook himself to God with more fervent supplication; and spent his nights without sleep, beseeching Him that He would succour the city, while enduring these things, and make the mind of the Emperor more placable. And as soon as he came to that great city, and had entered the royal palace, he stood before the Emperor at a distance -- speechless -- weeping -- with downcast eyes -- covering his face as if he himself had been the doer of all the mischief; and this he did, wishing first to incline him to mercy by his posture, and aspect, and tears; and then to begin an apology on our behalf; since there is but one hope of pardon for those who have offended, which is to be silent, and to utter nothing in defense of what has been done. For he was desirous that one feeling should be got rid of, and that another should take its place; that anger should be expelled, and sadness introduced, in order that he might thus prepare the way for the words of his apology; which indeed actually took place. And just as Moses going up to the mount, when the people had offended, stood speechless himself, until God called him, saying, Let me alone, and I will blot out this people; Exodus 32:10 so also did he now act: The

Emperor therefore, when he saw him shedding tears, and bending toward the ground, himself drew near; and what he really felt on seeing the tears of the priest, he made evident by the words he addressed to him; for they were not those of a person provoked or inflamed, but of one in sorrow; not of one enraged, but rather dejected, and under constraint of extreme pain.

7. And that this is true, you will understand when you hear what were his words. For he did not say, What does this mean? Have you come heading an embassy on behalf of impious and abominable men, such as ought not even to live; on behalf of rebels, of revolutionists, who deserve the utmost punishment? But dismissing all words of that sort, he composed a defense of himself full of respectfulness and dignity; and he enumerated the benefits, which during the whole time of his reign he had conferred upon the city; and at each of these he said, Was it thus I should have been treated in return for these things? What injuries had I done, that they should take such revenge? What complaint had they, great or small, that they must not insult me only, but the deceased also? Was it not sufficient to wreak their resentment against the living? Yet they thought they were doing nothing grand, unless they insulted those now in their graves. Granting that I had injured them, as they suppose; surely it would have been becoming to spare the dead, who had done them no wrong; for they could not have the same complaint against them. Did I not ever esteem this city above every thing, and account it as dearer than my native place? And was it not a matter of my continual prayers to visit this city; and did I not make this my oath to all men?

8. Upon this, the priest sobbing bitterly, and shedding warmer tears, no longer kept silence: for he saw that the defense of the Emperor was raising our crime to a still higher amount; but heaving from the bottom of his heart a deep and bitter sigh, he said, We must confess, O Emperor, this love which you have shown towards our country! We cannot deny it! On this account, especially, we mourn, that a city thus beloved has been bewitched by demons; and that we should have appeared ungrateful towards her benefactor, and have provoked her ardent lover. And although you were to overthrow; although you were to burn; although you were to put to death; or whatever else you might do, you would never yet have taken on us the revenge we deserve. We ourselves have, by anticipation, inflicted on ourselves what is worse than a thousand deaths! For what can be more bitter, than when we are found to have unjustly provoked our benefactor, and one who loved us so much, and the whole world knows it, and condemns us for the most monstrous ingratitude! If Barbarians had made an incursion on our city, and razed its walls, and burnt its houses, and had taken and carried us away captive, the evil had been less. And why so? But because, while you live, and continue such a generous kindness towards us, there might be a hope that we might again be brought back to our former condition, and regain a more illustrious liberty. But now, having been deprived of your favour, and having quenched your love, which was a greater security to us than any wall, whom have we left to fly to? Where else shall we have to look, when we have provoked so benign a lord, so indulgent a father? So that while they seem to have committed offenses of the most intolerable kind, they have on the other hand suffered the most terrible evils; not daring to look any man in the face; nor being able to look upon the sun with free eyes; shame everywhere weighing down their eyelids, and compelling them to hide their heads! Deprived of their confidence, they are now in a more miserable condition than any captives, and undergo the utmost dishonour; and while thinking of the magnitude of their evils, and the height of insolence to which they have rushed, they can scarce draw breath; inasmuch as they have drawn on their own heads severer reproaches from all the inhabitants of the world, than even from him who is seen to have been insulted.

9. But yet, O Emperor, if you are willing, there is a remedy for the wound, and a medicine for these evils, mighty as they are! Often, indeed, has it occurred among private individuals, that great and insufferable

offenses have become a foundation for great affection. Thus also did it happen in the case of our human race. For when God made man, and placed him in Paradise, and held him in much honour; the devil could not bear this his great prosperity, and envied him, and cast him out from that dignity which had been granted. But God was so far from forsaking him, that He even opened Heaven to us instead of Paradise; and in so doing, both showed His own lovingkindness, and punished the devil the more severely. So do thou too now! The demons have lately used all their efforts, that they may effectually rend from your favour that city which was dearest of all to you. Knowing this then, demand what penalty you will, but let us not become outcasts from your former love! Nay, though it is a strange thing, I must say, display towards us now still greater kindness than ever; and again write this city's name among the foremost in your love -- if you are indeed desirous of being revenged upon the demons who were the instigators of these crimes! For if you pull down, and overturn, and raze the city, you will be doing those very things which they have long been desiring. But if you dismiss your anger, and again avow that you love it even as you did before, you have given them a deadly blow. You have taken the most perfect revenge upon them by showing, not only that nothing whatever has come for them of their evil designs; but that all has proved the very opposite of what they wished. And you would be just in acting thus, and in showing mercy to a city, which the demons envied on account of your affection; for if you had not so exceedingly loved her, they would not have envied her to such a degree! So that even if what I have asserted is extraordinary, it is nevertheless, true, that what the city has suffered, has been owing to you, and your love! What burning, what devastation, so bitter as those words, which you uttered in your own defense?

10. You say now, that you have been insulted, and sustained wrongs such as no Emperor ever yet did. But if you will, O most gracious, most wise, and most religious Sovereign, this contempt will procure you a crown, more honourable and splendid than the diadem you wear! For this diadem is a display of your princely virtue, but it is also a token of the munificence of him who gave it; but the crown woven from this your humanity will be entirely your own good work, and that of your own love of wisdom; and all men will admire you less for the sake of these precious stones, than they will applaud you for your superiority over this wrath. Were your Statues thrown down? You have it in your power again to set up others yet more splendid. For if you remit the offenses of those who have done you injury, and take no revenge upon them, they will erect a statue to you, not one in the forum of brass, nor of gold, nor inlaid with gems; but one arrayed in that robe which is more precious than any material, that of humanity and tender mercy! Every man will thus set you up in his own soul; and you will have as many statues, as there are men who now inhabit, or shall hereafter inhabit, the whole world! For not only we, but all those who come after us, and their successors, will hear of these things, and will admire and love you, just as if they themselves had experienced this kindness!

11. And to show that I do not speak this in a way of flattery, but that it will certainly be so, I will relate to you an ancient piece of history, that you may understand that no armies, nor warlike weapons, nor money, nor multitude of subjects, nor any other such things are wont to make sovereigns so illustrious, as wisdom of soul and gentleness. It is related of the blessed Constantine, that on one occasion, when a statue of himself had been pelted with stones, and many were instigating him to proceed against the perpetrators of the outrage; saying, that they had disfigured his whole face by battering it with stones, he stroked his face with his hand, and smiling gently, said, I am quite unable to perceive any wound inflicted upon my face. The head appears sound, and the face also quite sound. Thus these persons, overwhelmed with shame, desisted from their unrighteous counsel.

This saying, even to the present day, all repeat; and length of time has neither weakened nor extinguished the memory of such exalted wisdom. How much more illustrious is such an action, than any number of warlike trophies! Many and great titles did he build, and many barbarous tribes did he conquer; not one of which we now remember; but this saying is repeated over and over again, to the present day; and those who follow us, as well as those who come after them, will all hear of it. Nor indeed is this the only admirable thing; that they will hear of it; but that when men speak of it, they do so with approbation and applause; and those who hear of it, receive it with the like; and there is no one who, when he has heard it, is able to remain silent, but each at once cries out, and applauds the man who uttered it, and prays that innumerable blessings may be his lot even now deceased. But if among men, this saying has gained him so much honour, how many crowns will he obtain with the merciful God!

12. And why need I speak of Constantine, and other men's examples, when it were fitting that I should exhort you by considerations nearer home, and drawn from your own praiseworthy actions. You remember how but lately, when this feast was near at hand, you sent an epistle to every part of the world giving orders that the inmates of the prisons should be set free, and their crimes be pardoned. And as if this were not sufficient to give proof of your generosity, you said in your letters, O that it were possible for me to recal and to restore those who are dead, and to bring them back to their former state of life! Remember now these words. Behold the season of recalling and restoring the deceased, and bringing them back to former life! For these are indeed already dead, even before the sentence has been pronounced; and the city has now taken up its tabernacle at the very gates of Hades! Therefore raise it up again, which you can do without money, without expense, without loss of time or labour! It is sufficient merely for you to open your lips, and you will restore to life the city which at present lies in darkness. Grant now, that henceforth it may bear an appellation derived from your philanthropy; for it will not be so much indebted to the kindness of him who first founded it, as it will be to your sentence. And this is exceedingly reasonable; for he but gave it its beginning, and departed; but you, when it had grown up and become great; and when it was fallen, after all that great prosperity; will have been its restorer. There would have been nothing so wonderful in your having delivered it from danger, when enemies had captured, and barbarians overrun it, as in your now sparing it. That, many of the Emperors have frequently done; but should you alone accomplish this, you will be first in doing it, and that beyond all expectation. And the former of these good deeds, the protection of your subjects, is not at all wonderful or extraordinary; but is one of those events which are of continual occurrence; but the latter, the dismissal of wrath after the endurance of such provocations, is something which surpasses human nature.

13. Reflect, that the matter now for your consideration is not respecting this city only, but is one that concerns your own glory; or rather, one that affects the cause of Christianity in general. Even now the Gentiles, and Jews, and the whole empire as well as the barbarians, (for these last have also heard of these events,) are eagerly looking to you, and waiting to see what sentence you will pronounce with regard to these transactions. And should you decree a humane and merciful one; all will applaud the decision, and glorify God, and say one to another, Heavens! How great is the power of Christianity, that it restrains and bridles a man who has no equal upon earth; a sovereign, powerful enough to destroy and devastate all things; and teaches him to practice such philosophy as one in a private station had not been likely to display! Great indeed must be the God of the Christians, who makes angels out of men, and renders them superior to all the constraining force of our nature!

14. Nor ought you, assuredly, to entertain that idle fear; nor to bear with those who say that other cities will become worse, and grow more contemptuous of authority, if this city goes unpunished. For if you were

unable to take vengeance; and they, after doing these things, had forcibly defied you; and the power on each side was equally matched; then reasonably enough might such suspicions be entertained. But if, terrified and half dead with fear, they run to cast themselves at your feet, through me; and expect daily nothing else but the pit of slaughter, and are engaged in common supplications; looking up to heaven and calling upon God to come to their aid, and to favour this our embassy; and have each given charge about his private affairs, as if they were at their last gasp; how can such a fear be otherwise than superfluous? If they had been ordered to be put to death, they would not have suffered as much as they do now, living as they have done so many days in fear and trembling; and when the evening approaches, not expecting to behold the morning; nor when the day arrives, hoping to reach the evening! Many too have fallen in with wild beasts, while pursuing their way through desert places, and removing to untrodden spots; and not men only, but also little children and women; free born, and of good condition; hiding themselves many days and nights in caves, and ravines, and holes of the desert! A new mode of captivity has indeed befallen the city. Whilst the buildings and walls are standing, they suffer heavier calamities than when cities have been set on fire! Whilst no barbarian foe is present, while no enemy appears, they are more wretchedly situated than if actually taken; and the rustling only of a leaf scares them all every day! And these are matters which are universally known; so that if all men had seen the city razed to the ground, they would not have been taught such a lesson of sobriety, as by hearing of the calamities which have now befallen it. Suppose not, therefore, that other cities will be made worse in future! Not even if you had overturned other cities, would you have so effectually corrected them, as now, by this suspense concerning their fate, having chastised them more severely than by any punishment!

15. Do not, then, carry this calamity any farther; but allow them henceforth to take breath again. For to punish the guilty, and to exact the penalty for these deeds, were easy and open to any one; but to spare those who have insulted you, and to pardon those who have committed offenses undeserving of pardon, is an act of which only some one or two are capable; and especially so, where the person treated with indignity is the Emperor. It is an easy matter to place the city under the subjection of fear; but to dispose all to be loving subjects; and to persuade them to hold themselves well affected towards your government; and to offer not only their common, but individual prayers for your empire; is a work of difficulty.

A monarch might expend his treasures, or put innumerable troops in motion, or do what else he pleased, but still he would not be able to draw the affections of so many men towards himself as may now very easily be done. For they who have been kindly dealt with, and those who hear of it too, will be well affected towards you, even as the recipients of the benefit. How much money, how many labours would you not have expended to win over to yourself the whole world in a short space of time; and to be able to persuade all those men who are now in existence, as well as all future generations, to invoke upon your head the same blessings which they pray for on behalf of their own children!

And if you will receive such a reward from men, how much greater will you have from God! And this, not merely from the events which are now taking place, but from those good deeds which shall be performed by others in time to come. For if ever it should be that an event similar to what has now occurred should take place, (which God forbid!) and any of those who have been treated with indignity, should then be consulting about prosecuting measures against the rioters; your gentleness and moral wisdom will serve them instead of all other teaching and admonition; and they will blush and be ashamed, having such an example of wisdom, to appear inferior.

So that in this way you will be an instructor to all posterity; and you will obtain the palm among them, even although they should attain to the highest point of moral wisdom! For it is not the same thing for a person

to set the first example of such meekness himself and by looking at others, to imitate the good actions they have performed. On this account, whatever philanthropy, or meekness, those who come after you may display, you will enjoy the reward along with them; for he who provides the root, must be considered the source of the fruits.

For this reason, no one can possibly now share with you the reward that will follow your generosity, since the good deed has been entirely your own. But you will share the reward of all those who shall come after, if any such persons should make their appearance; and it will be in your power to have an equal share in the merit of the good work along with them, and to carry off a portion as great as teachers have with scholars. And supposing that no such person should come into being, the tribute of commendation and applause will be accumulating to you throughout every age.

16. For consider, what it is for all posterity to hear it reported, that when so great a city had become obnoxious to punishment and vengeance, that when all were terrified, when its generals, its magistrates and judges, were all in horror and alarm, and did not dare to utter a word on behalf of the wretched people; a single old man, invested with the priesthood of God, came and moved the heart of the Monarch by his mere aspect and intercourse; and that the favour which he bestowed upon no other of his subjects, he granted to this one old man, being actuated by a reverence for God's laws! For in this very thing, O Emperor, that I have been sent hither on this embassy, the city has done you no small honour; for they have thus pronounced the best and the most honourable judgment on you, which is, that you respect the priests of God, however insignificant they may be, more than any office placed under your authority!

17. But at the present time I have come not from these only, but rather from One who is the common Lord of angels and men, to address these words to your most merciful and most gentle soul, if you forgive men their debts, your heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses. Matthew 6:12 Remember then that Day when we shall all give an account of our actions! Consider that if you have sinned in any respect, you will be able to wipe away all offenses by this sentence and by this determination, and that without difficulty and without toil. Some when they go on an embassy, bring gold, and silver, and other gifts of that kind. But I have come into your royal presence with the sacred laws; and instead of all other gifts, I present these; and I exhort you to imitate your Lord, who while He is daily insulted by us, unceasingly ministers His blessings to all! And do not confound our hopes, nor defeat our promises. For I wish you withal to understand, that if it be your resolution to be reconciled, and to restore your former kindness to the city, and to remit this just displeasure, I shall go back with great confidence. But if you determine to cast off the city, I shall not only never return to it, nor see its soil again, but I shall in future utterly disown it, and enrol myself a member of some other city; for God forbid that I should ever belong to that country, which you, the most mild and merciful of all men, refuse to admit to peace and reconciliation!

18. Having said this, and much more to the same effect, he so overcame the Emperor, that the same thing occurred which once happened to Joseph. For just as he, when he beheld his brethren, longed to shed tears, but restrained his feeling, in order that he might not spoil the part which he was playing; even so did the Emperor mentally weep, but did not let it be seen, for the sake of those who were present. He was not, however, able to conceal the feeling at the close of the conference; but betrayed himself, though against his will. For after this speech was finished, no further words were necessary, but he gave utterance to one only sentiment, which did him much more honour than the diadem. And what was that? How, said he, can it be any thing wonderful or great, that we should remit our anger against those who have treated us with indignity; we, who ourselves are but men; when the Lord of the universe, having come as He did on earth, and having been made a servant for us, and crucified by those who had experienced His kindness,

besought the Father on behalf of His crucifiers, saying, Forgive them, for they know not what they do? Luke 23:34 What marvel, then, if we also should forgive our fellow-servants! And that these words were not a pretence was proved by all that followed. And not the least, that particular circumstance which I am now about to mention; for this our priest, when he would have remained there, and celebrated the feast together with himself, he urged, though contrary to what he would have wished -- to use all speed, and diligence, to present himself to his fellow citizens. I know, said he, that their souls are still agitated; and that there are many relics of the calamity left. Go, give them consolation! If they see the helmsman, they will no longer remember the storm that has passed away; but all recollection of these sorrowful events will be effaced! And when the Priest was urgent, entreating him to send his own son, he, wishing to give the most satisfactory proof of his having entirely blotted out from his soul every wrathful feeling, answered; Pray that these hindrances may be taken out of the way; that these wars may be put an end to; and then I will certainly come myself.

19. What could be gentler than such a soul? Let the Gentiles henceforward be ashamed; or rather, instead of being ashamed, let them be instructed; and leaving their native error, let them come back to the strength of Christianity, having learned what our philosophy is, from the example of the Emperor and of the Priest! For our most pious Emperor stayed not at this point; but when the Bishop had left the city, and come over the sea, he dispatched there also certain persons, being most solicitous and painstaking to prevent any waste of time lest the city should be thus deprived of half its pleasure, while the bishop was celebrating the feast beyond its walls. Where is the gracious father that would have so busied himself on behalf of those who had insulted him? But I must mention another circumstance that redounds to the praise of the just man. For when he had accomplished this, he did not make it his endeavour, as any one else might have done, who was fond of glory, to deliver those letters himself, which were to set us free from the state of dejection in which we were; but since he was journeying at too slow a rate for this, he thought proper to send forward another person in his stead; one among those who were skilled in horsemanship, to be the bearer of the good news to the city; lest its sadness should be prolonged by the tardiness of his arrival. For the only thing he earnestly coveted was this; not that he might come himself, bringing these favourable tidings, so full of all that is delightful, but that our country might as soon as possible breathe freely again.

20. What therefore ye then did, in decking the forum with garlands; lighting lamps, spreading couches of green leaves before the shops, and keeping high festival, as if the city had just come into being, this do ye, although in another manner, throughout all time;-- being crowned, not with flowers, but with virtue -- kindling in your souls the light which comes from good works; rejoicing with a spiritual gladness. And let us never fail to give God thanks continually for all these things, not only that he has freed us from these calamities, but that he also permitted them to happen; and let us acknowledge his abundant goodness! For by both these has He adorned our city. Now all these things according to the prophetic saying, Declare ye to your children; and let your children tell their children; and their children again another generation. Joel 1:3 So that all who shall be hereafter, even to the consummation, learning this act of God's lovingkindness towards the city, may call us blessed, in having enjoyed such a favour -- may marvel at our Sovereign, who raised up the city when it was so grievously falling -- and may themselves be profited, being stimulated to piety by means of all which has happened! For the history of what has lately happened to us, will have power to profit not only ourselves, if we constantly remember it, but also those who shall come after us. All these things then being considered, let us always give thanks to God who loves man; not merely for our deliverance from these fearful evils, but for their being permitted to overtake us -- learning this from the divine Scriptures, as well as from the late events that have befallen us; that He

ever disposes all things for our advantage, with that lovingkindness which is His attribute, which God grant, that we may continually enjoy, and so may obtain the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/homily-21-on-the-statues/>

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