

John 6:16-25

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon on John 6:16-25 emphasizes the importance of seeking spiritual sustenance and understanding Christ's divine power amidst life's storms.

Scripture: Matthew 9:2, Luke 16:25, John 6:19-22, John 6:24

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Faith And Doubt"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on Christ's provision for His disciples even when He is physically distant, showcasing His power and teaching moments through miracles. The disciples, filled with love for Jesus, entered a ship in the dark, facing a storm, and were troubled until Jesus revealed Himself walking on water, calming their fears. By not immediately entering the ship, Jesus magnified the miracle, demonstrating His divinity and power over nature. The people witnessed the disciples' journey and Jesus' miraculous arrival in Capernaum, yet failed to grasp the significance of the signs before them, focusing on material needs rather than spiritual understanding.

Transcript

And when even was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come unto them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

1. Christ provides for the good of his disciples not only when He is present in the body, but also when far away; for having abundance of means and of skill, He effects one and the same end by contrary actions. Observe, for instance, what He has done here. He leaves His disciples, and goes up into a mountain; and they, when even had come, went down unto the sea. They waited for Him until evening, expecting that He would come unto them; but when even had come, they could no longer endure not to seek their Master; so great a love possessed them. They said not, It is now evening, and night has overtaken us, whither shall we depart? The place is dangerous, the time unsafe; but, goaded by their longing, they entered into the ship. For it is not without a cause that the Evangelist has declared the time also, but by it to show the warmth of their love.

Wherefore then does Christ let them go, and not show Himself? And again, wherefore does He show Himself walking alone upon the sea? By the first He teaches them how great (an evil) it is to be forsaken by Him, and makes their longing greater; by the second, again, He shows forth His power. For as in His teaching they heard not all in common with the multitude, so in the case of the miracles they saw them not

all with the mass of people, since it was needful that they who were about to receive in charge the presidency of the world, should have somewhat more than the rest. And what sort of miracles, says some one, saw they by themselves? The Transfiguration on the mount; this on the sea, and those after the Resurrection, which are many and important. And from these I conjecture that there were others also. They came to Capernaum without any certain information, but expecting to find Him there, or even in mid passage; this the Evangelist implies by saying that it was now dark, and Jesus was not yet come to them.

And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. What did they? They were troubled, for there were many and various causes which forced them to be so. They were afraid by reason of the time for it was dark, of the storm for the sea had risen, of the place for they were not near land; but,

John 6:19

Had rowed about five and twenty furlongs.

And, lastly, by reason of the strangeness of the thing, for,

They see Him walking upon the sea. And when they were greatly troubled,

John 6:20

He says unto them, It is I, be not afraid.

Wherefore then appears He? To show that it was He who would make the storm cease. For this the Evangelist has shown, saying,

John 6:21

They were willing to receive Him, and immediately the ship was near the land.

He not only gave them a safe passage, but also one with a fair wind.

To the multitude He shows not Himself walking upon the sea, for the miracle was too great to suit their infirmity. Indeed, even by the disciples He was not seen long doing this, but He appeared, and at once retired. Now this seems to me to be a different miracle from that found in Matthew xiv .; and that it is different is clear from many reasons. For He works often the same miracles, in order to cause the beholders not merely to count them very strange, but also to receive them with great faith.

It is I, be not afraid. As He spoke the word, He cast out fear from their souls. But at another time not so; wherefore Peter said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come unto You. Matthew 14:28 Whence then was it that at that time they did not straightway admit this, but now were persuaded? It was because then the storm continued to toss the bark, but now at His voice the calm had come. Or if the reason be not this, it is that other which I have before mentioned, that oftentimes working the same miracles, He made the second to be readily received by means of the first. But wherefore went He not up into the ship? Because He would make the marvel greater, would more openly reveal to them His Godhead, and would show them, that when He before gave thanks, He did not so as needing aid, but in condescension to them. He allowed the storm to arise, that they might ever seek Him; He stilled the storm, that He might make known to them His power; He went not up into the ship, that He might make the marvel greater.

John 6:22

And the people that were there saw that there was none other boat there save the one into which the disciples had entered, and that Jesus went not into the boat, but His disciples.

And why is John so exact? Why said he not that the multitudes having passed over on the next day departed? He desires to teach us something else, namely, that Jesus allowed the multitudes if not openly, at least in a secret manner, to suspect what had taken place. For, They saw, says he, that there was none other boat there but one, and that Jesus went not into it with His disciples.

John 6:24

And embarking in boats from Tiberias, they came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

What else then could they suspect, save that He had arrived there crossing the sea on foot? For it was not possible to say that He had passed over in another ship. For there was one, says the Evangelist, into which His disciples entered. Still when they came to Him after so great a wonder, they asked Him not how He crossed over, how He arrived there, nor sought to understand so great a sign. But what say they?

John 6:25

Master, when did You come here?

2. Unless any one affirm that the when is here used by them in the sense of how. But it is worth while also to notice here the fickleness of their impulses For they who said, This is that Prophet; they who were anxious to take Him and make Him a king, now when they have found Him take no such counsel, but having cast out their astonishment, they no longer admire Him for His former deeds. They sought Him, desiring again to enjoy a table like the first.

The Jews under the guidance of Moses passed over the Red Sea, but that case is widely different from this. He did all with prayer and as a servant, but Christ with absolute power. There when the south wind blew, the water yielded so as to make them pass over on dry land, but here the miracle was greater. Exodus 14:21 For the sea retaining its proper nature so bare its Lord upon its surface, thus testifying to the Scripture which says, Who walks upon the sea as upon a pavement. Job 9:8

And with reason, when He was about to enter into stubborn and disobedient Capernaum, did He work the miracle of the loaves, as desiring not only by what took place within, but also by the miracles which were wrought without the city, to soften its disobedience. For was it not enough to soften even any stone, that such multitudes should come with great eagerness to that city? Yet they had no such feeling, but again desired food for the body; for which also they are reproached by Jesus.

Let us then, beloved, knowing these things, give thanks to God for things of sense, but much more for things spiritual; for such is His will, and it is on account of the latter that He gives the former, leading in, as it were, by these the more imperfect sort, and giving them previous teaching, because they are yet gaping upon the world. But when such persons having received these worldly things, rest in them, then are they upbraided and rebuked. For in the case of him that had the palsy, Christ wished first to give that which was spiritual, but they that were present endured it not; for when He said, Your sins be forgiven you, they exclaimed, This man blasphemeth.

Matthew 9:2 Let us not, I entreat you, be so affected, but let us make more account of those (spiritual) things. Wherefore? Because when spiritual things are present with us, no harm arises from the absence of

fleshly things; but when they are not, what hope, what comfort, shall then remain to us? Wherefore it is for these we ought always to call upon God, and entreat Him for them. And for such has Christ also taught us to pray; for if we unfold that Prayer, we shall find that there is nothing carnal in it, but all spiritual, and that even the small portion which seems to relate to sense, becomes by the manner spiritual.

For to bid us ask no more than our successive, that is, our daily, bread, would mark a mind spiritual and truly wise. And consider what goes before that, Hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done as in heaven so on earth; then, after naming that temporal (need), He quickly leaves it, and brings us again to the spiritual doctrine, saying, Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Nowhere has He put in the Prayer riches or glory or dominion, but all things contributing to the benefit of the soul; nothing earthly, but all things heavenly.

If then we are bidden to refrain from the things of this present life, how could we help being wretched and miserable, asking from God those things which even having He bids us cast away, to free us from care about them, and for which He bids us take no pains. This is the using vain repetition; and this is why we effect nothing by our prayers. How then, says some one, do the wicked grow rich, how the unjust and impure, plunderers and covetous? Not by God's giving; (away with the thought!) but by plundering, and taking more than their due.

And how does God allow them? As He allowed that rich man, reserving him for greater punishment. Luke 16:25 Hear what (Abraham) says to him; Son, thou in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. Therefore that we also come not to hear that voice, by living softly and idly, and gathering together for ourselves many sins, let us choose the true riches and right wisdom, that we may obtain the promised good things; to which may we all arrive, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and with whom, to the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

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