

TNS 17, 2 - St. John Chrysostom (349-407 CE), on 14 October 2025

Did You Know?

Kevin Dale Miller, "[Did You Know?](#)," *Christian History Magazine*-Issue 44: *John Chrysostom: Legendary Early Church Preacher* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1994). Kevin Dale Miller is assistant editor of *The Christian Reader* and *Your Church* magazines.

Little-known and remarkable facts about St. John Chrysostom

The Greek name *Chrysostom*, meaning "Golden Mouth," was not given to John until 150 years after his death. The name stuck because of his greatness as a preacher.

John was forced to become bishop of Constantinople. He had served in Antioch as a priest for 14 years when one day military officials, under orders from an imperial official, kidnapped him. He was transported to the capital and ordained. Chrysostom accepted these events as God's providence.

Chrysostom was educated by one of the leading pagan teachers of his day, Libanius. In his writings, John cites more than 15 ancient Greek philosophers, including at least 30 references to Plato.

In keeping with his era, John favored *a cappella* singing in worship and opposed the use of musical instruments. Instruments were allowed in the Old Testament to entice people to attend worship, he said, but Christians shouldn't need such inducements.

As a youth, Chrysostom said he "plunged into the whirlpool of the world." His favorite pastime was the theater, which was noted for its bawdiness. He would later preach stinging indictments against such entertainment.

Christmas first appeared as a special feast during John's life. It was

celebrated at Antioch for the first time about 378, eight years before Chrysostom was ordained there.

In his writings, John refers to the New Testament 11,000 times, yet he never cites 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, or Revelation. These books were not part of the New Testaments that circulated in fourth-century Antioch.

Despite his popularity, John sometimes became discouraged with the seeming deafness of his listeners as they failed to apply the truths he spoke week after week. He once complained, "My work is like that of a man who is trying to clean a piece of ground into which a muddy stream is constantly flowing."

Though he occasionally praised the Jews, Chrysostom often called them "wretched" and "good-for-nothing" and worse. His vitriolic rhetoric was designed to dissuade Christians from superstitiously following Jewish practices, a problem in his day. Unfortunately, his anti-Jewish harangues were later used to justify violence against Jews.

In John's day, only about half the population of major cities like Antioch and Constantinople were Christian. Yet Christianity was rapidly becoming the official religion: Sundays were declared state and legal holidays; pagan festivals were abolished; the theater and circus were forbidden on Sunday; and finally, all pagan temples were closed and pagan sacrifice forbidden.

Chrysostom rarely attacked the institution of slavery as such, though he did once say, "Slavery is only the result of sin. Only avarice, envy, and insatiability have produced it." He told fellow Christians, "Why do you need such a swarm of slaves? Give them their freedom! But in any case, know that it is inhuman to strike a slave or put him in chains."

When John became archbishop of Constantinople, he sold expensive works of art his predecessors had acquired. He refused to give lavish dinner parties, nor did he ride around in a chariot or frequent the imperial palace. In the first year alone, Chrysostom saved enough in household expenses to build a hospital.

John was twice banished from Constantinople. His first exile lasted but a few days; an earthquake in the capital convinced the empress, who had arranged John's removal, to beg him to return. His second exile, though, lasted three years, physically wore him down, and finally killed him.

Chrysostom was such a popular preacher that sometimes people pushed and shoved their way toward the front of the church to hear him better.

Chrysostom had a habit of striking his right forefinger into his left hand when he was about to say something critical of someone or something.

Following Chrysostom's banishment, those loyal to him became known as Johnites. They were persecuted but persisted as a separate church until 438, when Chrysostom's bones were returned in honor to Constantinople.

More than 600 sermons and 200 letters of Chrysostom survive. His sermons on the Book of Acts are the only surviving commentary on that book from the first 1,000 years of Christianity.

GANZ NOTES

SERMON #1 – JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Version: 4, 5, 6, 13, 14 October 2025

POPE LEO XIV, “DILEXI TE” (4 OCTOBER 2025)

From Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) on St. Francis of Assisi, feast day on October 4th –

Il Poverello

Where is he now, who leaving wealth behind
grew so bold in poverty
that he threw off his clothes before the bishop
and stood naked in the square?

The most inward and loving of all,
he came forth like a new beginning,
the brown-robed brother of your nightingales,
with his wonder and good will
and delight in Earth.

The Book of Hours III, 33

11. A concrete commitment to the poor must also be accompanied by a change in mentality that can have an impact at the cultural level.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**mentality**” – 3. – 1895 – Mental character or disposition; the characteristic attitude of mind or way of thinking of a person, social group, etc. Frequently with modifying word.

In fact, **the illusion of happiness** derived from a comfortable life pushes many people towards a vision of life centered on the accumulation of wealth and social success at all costs, even at the expense of others and by taking advantage of unjust social ideals and political-economic systems that favor the strongest.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**illusion**” – 2.b. – 1571 – The fact or condition of being deceived or deluded by appearances, or an instance of this; a mental state involving the attribution of reality to what is unreal; a false conception or idea; a deception, delusion, fancy.

Thus, in a world where the poor are increasingly numerous, we paradoxically see the growth of a wealthy elite, living in a bubble of comfort and luxury, almost in another world compared to ordinary people. This means that a culture still persists – sometimes well disguised – **that discards others without even realizing it and tolerates with indifference** that millions of people die of hunger or survive in conditions unfit for human beings.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**indifference**” – 2. – 1660 – Absence of feeling for or against; hence *esp.* Absence of care for or about a person or thing; want of zeal, interest, concern, or attention; unconcern, apathy. Const. *to, towards*.

I remember, probably sometime in the 1970s, a Jesuit who worked with the poor said to me, “Rick, everyone now knows about the Third World and have seen enough images to know that it is bad/wrong. But what is worse is that there exists a Fourth World: those on the Earth whom we never see, never hear about, and therefore whom we ignore, for whose plight we are indifferent.

I heard just this past week someone say, “The opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference.”

A few years ago, the photo of a lifeless child lying on a Mediterranean beach caused an uproar; unfortunately, apart from some momentary outcry, similar events are becoming increasingly irrelevant and seen as marginal news items.

14. The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice. Yet, there are those who still presume to make this claim, thus revealing their own blindness and cruelty. Of course, among the poor there are also those who do not want to work, perhaps because their ancestors, who worked all their lives, died poor. **However, there are so many other men and women – who**

nonetheless work from dawn to dusk, perhaps collecting scraps or the like, even though they know that their hard work will only help them to scrape by, but never really improve their lives. Nor can it be said that most of the poor are such because they do not “deserve” otherwise, as maintained by that specious view of meritocracy that sees only the successful as “deserving.”

WHEN

During his priesthood in Antioch, St John preached his series of sermons on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, perhaps in 388 or 389.³

Oxford Classical Dictionary at “**Theodosius I, the Great (346-395 CE)**” –

Theodosius' death was followed by what is often seen as the formal division of the Roman empire into eastern and western parts. His settlement with the Goths had long-term effects, as under their leaders the Goths installed themselves ever more intimately into the political structure and society of the Roman empire. His religious policies mark a significant step in the developing alliance between Church and State and were greeted with delight by Christian writers like Orosius and Augustine, and with dismay by Eunapius. But he was brought to the throne at a time of major crisis, overcame it to the benefit of the empire, and imposed his personality on Roman history.

World History Encyclopedia –

This was the Classic period of Mesoamerica (present-day Mexico and Central America: a time of flourishing city-states, advanced Mathematics, and Astronomy. For example, The Maya was at its peak during its Classic period from 200-900 CE. “**The Mesoamerican civilizations were a group of advanced, pre-Columbian cultures** that flourished in parts of present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador from around 1500 BCE to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Those civilizations include the Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Aztec, and many others.”

³ PG 48.963–1054.

Joshua J. Mark, “**Maya**” in *World History Encyclopedia* – The Maya are an indigenous people of Mexico and Central America who have continuously inhabited the lands comprising modern-day Yucatan, Quintana Roo, Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas in Mexico and southward through Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras. **The designation Maya comes from the ancient Yucatan city of Mayapan, the last capital of a Maya Kingdom in the Post-Classic Period.** The Maya people refer to themselves by ethnicity and language bonds such as Quiche in the south or Yucatec in the north (though there are many others). The term *Mayan* refers to the language while *Maya* references the people and their culture.

The El Tajin Period: 250-900 – This period is also known as the Classic Period in Mesoamerican and Maya history. The name ‘El Tajin’ refers to the great city complex on the Gulf of Mexico which has been recognized as one of the most important sites in Mesoamerica. During this time the great urban centers rose across the land and the Maya numbered in the millions. The very important ball game which came to be known as *Poc-a-Toc* was developed and more ball courts have been found in and around the city of El Tajin than anywhere else in the region. Who, precisely, the people were who inhabited El Tajin remains unknown as there were over fifty different ethnic groups represented in the city and dominance has been ascribed to both the Maya and the Totonac.



He began on 2 January, referring to the riotous celebrations of the *Saturnalia* on the previous day, which marked the beginning of the civil year. While the parties, carousing, and entertainments went on, faithful members of the church had been listening to John exhort them to do everything for God's glory.⁴ Now they were back for the second day, and he introduced the parable. On the next two occasions, probably the next two Saturdays or Sundays, he continued to preach on the parable. The fourth time, he told his congregation, he would have finished explaining the parable if it had not been necessary to praise the local martyrs St Babylas and Saints Juveninus and Maximinus.⁵ The feast day of St Babylas is 24 January, about three weeks after the first sermon on Lazarus; Juveninus and Maximinus were honored a few days later. On the next occasion after that, St John concluded with the fourth sermon on the parable. A week later, probably, he began the fifth sermon of the series by saying that he could speak more on the parable, but to keep his hearers from being surfeited he would discuss another text instead.

The sixth and seventh sermons were given later on, but while the parable was still on his mind and his congregation's – perhaps later the same year. The sixth was preached after an earthquake, when it seemed timely to speak of God's judgment and the necessity of choosing the right way of life before it was too late. The seventh sermon begins as an admonition to those who frequent the race-course, with the text, "Enter by the narrow gate;" Lazarus and the rich man came easily to the preacher's mind as travellers by the narrow way and the easy road respectively.¹

ANTIOCHENE EXEGESIS

Frances Young, "Interpretation of Scripture" in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (2008), pp. 853-54.

Antiochene exegesis has been characterized as "literal" and "historical" over against the allegorizing of the Alexandrian school. ... Fundamentally, the Antiochenes approached text philologically, reacting against the identification of allegory where there was nothing in the text to suggest that that was intended. ...

^{*4} PG 48.953–961.

^{*5} PG 50.527–533, 571–578.

¹ Catharine P. Roth, "[Introduction](#)," in *On Wealth and Poverty*, ed. John Behr, trans. Catharine P. Roth, Popular Patristics Series, Number 9 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 10–11.

They were basically interested in the narrative logic of particular stories, objecting to methods which turned the text into a kind of code to be cracked; and they were also concerned to preserve the overarching story of the rule of faith (i.e., fall and redemption), criticizing the kind of allegory which emptied of reality the story of Adam and Eve, for example.

EXEGESIS (from Gk ἐξηγέομαι, 'I narrate', 'explain') The act of explaining a text, in theology usually a sacred text. The explanation may include translation, paraphrase, or commentary on the meaning. Its purpose may be either to describe the author's meaning or to apply that meaning to a contemporary situation. Its rules are governed by the discipline of hermeneutics. Biblical exegesis has been practised from early times, both by Jews and Christians. In the time of Jesus, it was practised by Philo, the Qumran community and the rabbis, according to different methods. These were also employed by the writers of the NT, who likewise presupposed the divine inspiration of the OT. In conflict with gnostic exegetes, Christian writers, esp. Irenaeus and Tertullian, insisted that the meaning of scripture be elucidated in conformity with apostolic tradition. A chiefly allegorical mode of interpretation was fostered esp. in **the Alexandrian school**, whose earliest exponents were Clement and Origen. By contrast, **the school of Antioch**, represented, among others, by Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, cultivated the explanation of the literal sense of the Bible.²

OVERVIEW OF SERMON #1

In the first sermon, St John deals with the lives of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–21). The parable passes over the moral qualities of the two men, **so St John must discuss what is wrong with the life of luxury and what is good about the life of**

Gk Greek

NT New Testament

OT Old Testament

esp. especially

esp. especially

² John Barton, "[Exegesis](#)," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Oxford, United Kingdom; New York: Oxford University Press, 2022) 675–676.

poverty. Are all the rich condemned and all the poor saved? No, although the poor have a better chance. **The rich man's chief fault was his failure to give alms; he neglected the duty of helping his neighbor. In addition, he harmed his own spiritual health by his self-indulgent way of life. Lazarus, on the other hand, by enduring patiently without complaint used his sufferings to build up his spiritual strength.** Although St John does not deny that poverty is a misfortune, he says nothing about trying to escape from it. **He is concerned with spiritual, not material well-being.** If we wish to store up treasure in heaven, we must both observe the commandment of love towards our neighbor and practice the asceticism appropriate to our circumstances for the benefit of our own souls.³

TEXT

Pope Leo XIV, *Delecti Te* (4 October 2025) –

14. **The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate. Nor, for most of them, is poverty a choice.** Yet, there are those who still presume to make this claim, thus revealing their own blindness and cruelty. Of course, among the poor there are also those who do not want to work, perhaps because their ancestors, who worked all their lives, died poor. **However, there are so many other men and women – who nonetheless work from dawn to dusk, perhaps collecting scraps or the like, even though they know that their hard work will only help them to scrape by, but never really improve their lives.** Nor can it be said that most of the poor are such because they do not “deserve” otherwise, as maintained by that specious view of meritocracy that sees only the successful as “deserving.”

³ Catharine P. Roth, [“Introduction,”](#) in *On Wealth and Poverty*, ed. John Behr, trans. Catharine P. Roth, Popular Patristics Series, Number 9 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 12.

Kevin Dale Miller, "Did You Know?" *Christian History Magazine* - When John became archbishop of Constantinople, he sold expensive works of art his predecessors had acquired. He refused to give lavish dinner parties, nor did he ride around in a chariot or frequent the imperial palace. In the first year alone, Chrysostom saved enough in household expenses to build a hospital.⁴

John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, ed. John Behr, trans. Catharine P. Roth, Popular Patristics Series, Number 9 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 19-38.

St. John Chrysostom, first sermon on Lazarus and the rich man

Yesterday, although it was a **feast-day of Satan**, you preferred to keep a spiritual feast, receiving our words with great good will, and spending most of the day here in church, drinking a drunkenness of self-control, and dancing in the chorus of Paul.

World History Encyclopedia - "Saturnalia" - The Saturnalia was an enduring Roman festival dedicated to the agricultural god Saturn which was held between the 17th and 23rd of December each year during the winter solstice. Originating from archaic agricultural rituals the Roman festivities came to include a general round of gift-giving, merrymaking, and role-reversals so that it became one of the most popular celebrations in the calendar and certainly the jolliest. The similarities of some of its features and the timing - pushed later into December over time - suggest a strong influence on the Christian celebration of Christmas. ... The Saturnalia was presided over by a king, chosen especially for the occasion, known as the *Saturnalicus princeps* or 'leader of the Saturnalia.' Sometimes he is referred to as the 'Lord of Misrule' as he was selected from the lowliest members of a household and given the right to conduct light-hearted mischief. It was a festive period when people gave gifts to one another. **Slaves had the freedoms enjoyed by ordinary citizens and were now able to gamble, get drunk in public, and throw aside the cloak of decorum they were meant to present at any other time of the year. More informal clothes (synthesis) were worn by citizens instead of the usual toga, and there was a general round of feasts, partying, game playing, and merrymaking for all.** These events made it

⁴ Kevin Dale Miller, "[Did You Know?](#)," *Christian History Magazine*-Issue 44: *John Chrysostom: Legendary Early Church Preacher* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1994).

the jolliest Roman festival in the calendar; a fact which led Catullus to famously describe it as 'the best of times.'

In this way a double benefit came to you, because you kept free of the disorderly dance of the drunkards and you revelled in well-ordered spiritual dances. You shared a drinking-bowl which did not pour out undiluted wine but was filled with spiritual instruction. **You became a flute and a lyre for the Holy Spirit. While others danced for the devil, you prepared yourselves by your occupation here to be spiritual instruments and vessels. You allowed the Holy Spirit to play on your souls and to breathe His grace into your hearts.** Thus, you sounded a harmonious melody to delight not only mankind but even the powers of heaven.

St John urges his congregation not to give up trying to correct those who drink excessively. We are doing our duty in giving salutary advice even if no one heeds us.

CONDEMNATION OF LUXURIOUS LIVING - But I have proved sufficiently that we must never desert those who are fallen, even if we know in advance that they will not heed us. **Now we must proceed to the condemnation of luxurious living.** As long as this feast continues, and the devil goes on wounding the souls of the drunkards with drink, our duty is to go on applying the remedies.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**luxury**” – **1. - 1340-1812** - † Lasciviousness, lust; *plural* lusts. *Obsolete.* **3. - 1633** - The habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly, whether food, dress, furniture, or appliances of any kind. **5.b. - 1780** - In particularized sense: Something which conduces to enjoyment or comfort in addition to what are accounted the necessities of life. Hence, in later use, something which is desirable but not indispensable.
< **Latin** *luxuria*, < *luxus* abundance, sumptuous enjoyment.

Yesterday we fortified ourselves against the drunkards with Paul’s words, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”¹ Today we will show them Paul’s Master, not merely advising and exhorting them to abstain from luxurious living, but actually chastising and punishing one who lived in luxury, for the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and what happened to both of them, demonstrates this very thing. But it will be best if I read you the whole parable from the beginning, to keep us from treating it too carelessly. “There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who made merry every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named

¹ 1 Cor. 10:31.

Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores."²

WHY PARABLES? - We might ask why the Master speaks in parables, and why He explained some parables but not others, and what in fact a parable is, and many other such questions – but we will save these for another time, so as not to delay this urgent discussion now. We will ask you only this one question, which of the evangelists it is who tells us that Christ told this parable. Who is it? Only Luke.

WHY DIFFERENT GOSPEL ACCOUNTS? - You must also know this, that all four evangelists reported some of Christ's sayings, but each of them individually chose others to report. Why is this so? **To make us read the other gospels, and to make us realize how remarkable their agreement is. For if all of them told everything, we would not pay careful attention to all of them, because one would be enough to teach us everything.** But if everything they tell were different, we would not see their remarkable agreement. For this reason, all of them wrote many things in common but each also chose some things to tell individually.

DESCRIBING THE RICH MAN - Now, what Christ teaches by the parable is this. There was a rich man, He says, living in great wickedness. The man was **not tested by any misfortune**, but everything flowed to him as if from a fountain. The very words, "He made merry every day," imply that **nothing unexpected happened to him**, no cause of distress or disturbance in his life. It is evident that he lived in wickedness both from the end which fell to his lot and, before the end, from **his contempt for the poor man**.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**contempt**" - **1.a. - a1393** - A feeling of dislike or hostility towards a person or thing one regards as inferior, worthless, or despicable; an attitude expressive of such a feeling; (later) a complete lack of consideration or respect for a person or thing. And the verb form "**to contemn**" - **1.a. - c1425** - *transitive*. To regard or treat (a person or thing) with contempt; to reject (a person or thing considered unworthy or undesirable); to scorn, disdain.

He himself has demonstrated that not only did he neglect that man by the gate, but he did not give alms to anyone else either. For if he did not give alms to this man who was continually prostrate at his gate, lying before his eyes, whom he had to see every day once or twice or many times as he went in and out, for the man was not lying in the street nor in a hidden or narrow place, but where the rich man whenever he made his entrance or exit was **forced unwillingly to see him, if (I say) he did not give alms to this man, who lay in such grievous suffering, and lived in such destitution, or rather**

² Luke 16:19-21.

for his whole life was troubled by chronic illness of the most serious kind, whom of those he encountered would he ever have been moved to pity?

The significance here of *a failure of feeling*. The rich man **understood** all that he “needed to know” about this unnamed creature at his door – not lack of intellect – but where had his fellow-feeling gone, his pity or compassion? Such damage to his WILL (95% percent of which power of soul is about AFFECT). But what is important is how **his negative AFFECT toward the poor man darkened his intellect**, causing the rich man not to feel any need to understand why the poor man got to be so miserable.

If we suppose that he passed the man by on the first day, he would probably have felt some pity on the second day; if he overlooked him even on that day, he surely ought to have been moved on the third or the fourth or the day after that, even if he were more cruel than the wild beasts. But **he felt no such emotion** but became harder-hearted and more reckless even than that unjust judge who knew neither fear of God nor shame before men.³ For the widow’s persistence persuaded that judge, cruel and savage though he was, to grant the favor. He was moved to pity at her supplication; **but even persistence could not move this rich man to help the poor man, although his petition was not equivalent to the widow’s, but much easier to fulfill and more just**. For she besought the judge to aid her against her enemies, but **he begged the rich man to release him from hunger and not to ignore him as he lay dying**. She pestered the judge with her petition, **but he appeared to the rich man many times each day lying in silence. This is enough to soften even the heart of stone**. For when we are pestered we often become harder; but when we see those who need help standing by in complete silence, uttering no sound, not complaining though never satisfied, but merely appearing to us in silence, even if we are more insensible than the very stones, we become ashamed at the excess of politeness and are moved to pity. And another fact was not less significant than these, that the very appearance of the poor man was pitiful, as he was overcome by hunger and long illness.

Nevertheless, none of this tamed that savage man.

This cruelty is the worst kind of wickedness; it is an inhumanity without rival. For it is not the same thing for one who lives in poverty not to help those in need, as for one who enjoys such luxury to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger.

Again, it is not the same thing to see a poor man once or twice and pass him by, as to look at him every day and not be aroused by the persistent sight to mercy and generosity. Again, it is not the same thing for one who is troubled in his heart by

³ Luke 18:2.

misfortune and distress not to help his neighbor, as for one who enjoys such happiness and continuous good fortune to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger, to lock up his heart, and not to be made more generous by his own joy. For you surely know this, that even if we are the most savage of men, we usually are made more gentle and kindly by good fortune. **But that man was not improved by his prosperity, but remained beastly, or rather he surpassed the cruelty and inhumanity of any beast in his behavior.**

Notice how St. John is paying little attention to *how much* wealth the rich man had, and how much he ought to donate. His whole focus is on the **character** of the rich man; on **the kind of person he has become** inside all of his wealth.

Nevertheless, he who lived in wickedness and inhumanity enjoyed every kind of good fortune, while the righteous man who practiced virtue endured the extremes of ill fortune.

For again in Lazarus' case, we can prove that he was righteous both by his end and, before his end, by **his patient endurance of poverty.**

Do you not seem to see the whole situation as if it were present? The rich man had his ship full of merchandise, and it sailed before the wind. But do not be surprised: he was hastening to shipwreck, since he refused to unload his cargo with discretion.

Shall I tell you another wickedness of his? His daily luxurious and unscrupulous feasting. For truly this is extreme wickedness, not only now, when such great wisdom is expected of us, but even at the beginning, under the old covenant, when not so much wisdom had been revealed. Hear what the prophet says: "Woe ... to you who are approaching the evil day, who are drawing near and adopting false sabbaths."⁴ What does this mean, "who are adopting false sabbaths?" **The Jews think that the sabbath is given to them for idleness. This is not the purpose, but in order that they may remove themselves from worldly cares and devote all their leisure to spiritual concerns.** It is evident from the facts that the sabbath is not a subject for idleness but for spiritual work.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**leisure**" – **2.a. - c1400** – In narrower sense: Opportunity afforded by freedom from occupations. **3.a. - a1400** – The state of having time at one's own disposal; time which one can spend as one pleases; free or unoccupied time.

The priest indeed does double work on that day: while a single sacrifice is offered every day, on that day he is bidden to offer a double sacrifice. **If the sabbath were simply for**

⁴ Amos 6:3.

idleness, the priest ought to be idle even more than the rest of the people. Since the Jews, although they were released from worldly activities, did not attend to spiritual matters, such as self-control, kindness, and hearing the divine Scriptures, but did the opposite, gorging themselves, getting drunk, stuffing themselves, feasting luxuriously, for this reason the prophet condemned them. For when he said, "Woe ... to you who are approaching the evil day," and added, "and adopting false sabbaths," he showed by his next words how their sabbaths were false. How did they make their sabbaths false? By working wickedness, feasting, drinking, and doing a multitude of shameful and grievous deeds. To prove that this is true, hear what follows. He reveals what I am saying by what he adds immediately: "Who sleep upon beds of ivory, and live delicately on their couches, and eat kids out of the flocks, and sucking calves out of the midst of the stalls ... who drink filtered wine, and anoint yourselves with the best ointment."⁵

SABBATH - You received the sabbath to free your soul from wickedness, but you have enslaved it further. For what could be worse than this frivolity, this sleeping on beds of ivory? The other sins, such as drunkenness, greed, and profligacy, provide some pleasure, however small; but in sleeping on beds of ivory, what pleasure is there? What comfort? **The beauty of the bed does not make our sleep sweeter or more pleasant, does it?** Rather it is more onerous and burdensome, if we have any sense. For when you consider that, while you sleep on a bed of ivory, someone else does not enjoy even sufficient bread, will your conscience not condemn you, and rise up against you to denounce this inequity? But if the accusation is of sleeping on beds of ivory which are also decorated all around with silver, what defense will we have?

THE EXAMPLE OF KING DAVID - Do you wish to see what makes a bed truly beautiful? I will show you now the splendor of a bed, not of a citizen or a soldier, but of a king. For even if you are the most ambitious of all men, I am sure that you will not wish to have a bed more splendid than the king's; and, what is more, I do not refer to any ordinary king, but the greatest king, more kingly than all other kings, who is still honored in song throughout the world: I am showing you **the bed of the blessed David**. What kind of bed did he have? Not adorned all over with silver and gold, but with tears and confessions. He himself tells this, when he says, "I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears."⁶ He fixes his tears like pearls everywhere on his bed. **And consider with me how he loved God in his soul. Since in the daytime many concerns about rulers, commanders, nations, peoples, soldiers, wars, peace, politics, and troubles in his household or outside or among his**

⁵ Amos 6:4-6.

⁶ Psalm 6:7.

neighbors, distracted him and diverted his attention, the time of leisure, which everyone else uses for sleep, he used for confession, prayers, and tears. He did not do this on one night only, ceasing on the second night, nor on two or three nights, omitting the nights in between, but he kept on doing this every night. For he says, "I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears," revealing the abundance and continuity of his tears. **When everyone was quiet and at rest, he met God alone, and the unsleeping eye was with him as he wept and mourned and told of his private sins. You also ought to make a bed like this for yourself.** Silver surrounding you awakens jealousy from men and stirs up anger from above; but tears like David's are able to quench the very fires of hell.

THE PATRIARCH JACOB - Shall I show you another bed? I mean **Jacob's**. He had the bare ground beneath him and a stone under his head. For this reason, he saw the spiritual Rock and that ladder by which angels ascended and descended.⁷ Let us also set our minds on such beds, so that we may see such dreams as well.

Genesis 28 (NJB):¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹ When he had reached a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he made it his pillow and lay down where he was. ¹² He had a dream: there was a ladder, planted on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and God's angels were going up and down on it.* ¹³ And there was Yahweh, standing beside him and saying, 'I, Yahweh, am the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The ground on which you are lying I shall give to you and your descendants.* ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as plentiful as the dust on the ground; you will spread out to west and east, to north and south, and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you and your descendants. ¹⁵ Be sure, I am with you; I shall keep you safe wherever you go, and bring you back to this country, for I shall never desert you until I have done what I have promised you.' ⁵

But if we lie on silver beds, not only will we not gain any pleasure, but besides we will endure distress. For when you consider that in the most extreme cold, in the middle of the night, when you are sleeping on a bed, the poor man has thrown himself on a pile of straw by the door of the bath-house, wrapping the stalks around him, shivering, stiff

⁷ Gen. 28; Compare 1 Cor. 10:4; several biblical rocks are interpreted as types of Christ.

*  Jn 1:51

* 12:2seq.; 13:14seq.; 15:5seq.; 18:18; 22:17seq.; 26:4 • 12:3b

⁵ [*The New Jerusalem Bible*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Ge 28:10-15.

with cold, pinched with hunger – even if you are the stoniest of all men, **I am sure that you will condemn yourself for providing for yourself unnecessary luxury while not allowing him even what is necessary.** “No soldier on service,” it is written, “gets entangled in civilian pursuits.”⁸ You are a spiritual soldier; this kind of soldier does not sleep on an ivory bed, but on the ground. He is not anointed with perfumed oils: these are the concern of those corrupt men who dally with courtesans, of those who act on the stage, of **those who live carelessly.**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**careless**” – **3. – 1578** – Not taking due care, not paying due attention to what one does, inattentive, negligent, thoughtless; inaccurate.

You must not smell of perfumes but of virtue. Nothing is more unclean for the soul than when the body has such a fragrance. **For the fragrance of the body and the clothes would be a sign of the stench and filthiness of the inner man. When the devil attacks and breaks down the soul with self-indulgence, and fills it with great frivolity, then he wipes off the stain of his own corruption on the body also with perfumes.** Just as those who are continually afflicted with a nasal discharge and catarrh will stain their clothes, their hands, and their faces as they continually wipe off the discharge from their noses, so also the soul of this wicked man will wipe off the discharge of evil on his body. Who will expect anything noble and good from one who smells of perfumes and who keeps company with women, or rather courtesans, and who leads the life of a dancer? Let your soul breathe a spiritual fragrance, so that you may give the greatest benefit both to yourself and to your companions.

LUXURY - There is nothing more grievous than luxury.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**luxury**” – **1. – 1340–1812** – † Lasciviousness, lust; *plural* lusts. *Obsolete.* **3. – 1633** – The habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly, whether food, dress, furniture, or appliances of any kind. **5.b. – 1780** – In particularized sense: Something which conduces to enjoyment or comfort in addition to what are accounted the necessities of life. Hence, in later use, something which is desirable but not indispensable.
< **Latin** *luxuria*, < *luxus* abundance, sumptuous enjoyment.

Hear what Moses says about it: Jacob “grew fat, he became thick and broad. The beloved one kicked out.”⁹ Moses does not say that Jacob walked out, but that the beloved one kicked out, suggesting how haughty and unbridled he had become. And

⁸ 2 Tim. 2:4.

⁹ Deut. 32:15.

elsewhere Moses says, when you have eaten and drunk, “take heed to yourself, that you forget not the Lord your God.”¹⁰ **In this way luxury often leads to forgetfulness.** As for you, my beloved, if you sit at table, remember that from the table you must go to prayer. Fill your belly so moderately that you may not become too heavy to bend your knees and call upon your God. Do you not see how the donkeys leave the manger ready to walk and carry loads and fulfill their proper service? But when you leave the table, you are useless and unserviceable for any kind of work. How will you avoid being more worthless even than the donkeys? **Why do I say this? Because that is the time when you most need to be sober and wide awake.**¹¹ **The time after dinner is the time for thanksgiving, and he who gives thanks should not be drunk but sober and wide awake.** After dinner let us not go to bed but to prayer, or we may become more irrational than the irrational beasts.

OVER-INDULGING FOOD - I know that many will condemn what I say, thinking that I am introducing a strange new custom into our life; but I will condemn more strongly the wicked custom which now prevails over us. **Christ has made it very clear that after taking nourishment at table we ought to receive not sleep in bed but prayer and reading of the divine Scriptures. When He had fed the great multitude in the wilderness, He did not send them to bed and to sleep but summoned them to hear divine sayings.** He had not filled their stomachs to bursting, nor abandoned them to drunkenness; *but when He had satisfied their need, He led them to spiritual nourishment.* Let us do the same; and let us accustom ourselves to eat only enough to live, not enough to be distracted and weighed down. For we were not born, we do not live, in order to eat and drink; but we eat in order to live.¹² At the beginning life was not made for eating but eating for life. But we, as if we had come into the world for this purpose, spend everything for eating.

Now to make our denunciation of luxury more vehement and more pertinent to those who practice it, let us lead our sermon back to **Lazarus**. Thus, our advice and counsel will be truer and clearer, when you see those who attended to good eating chastised and punished, not in words but in actions. **For as the rich man lived in such wickedness, practiced luxury every day, and dressed himself splendidly, he was preparing for himself a more grievous punishment, building himself a greater fire, and making his penalty inexorable and his retribution inaccessible to pardon.**

¹⁰ Deut. 8:11.

¹¹ Compare 1 Thess. 5:6, 1 Peter 5:8.

¹² Socrates is reported to have said that most people live in order to eat, but that he himself ate in order to live.

THE CHARACTER OF LAZARUS - **The poor man, on the other hand, lay at his gate and did not become discouraged, blaspheme, or complain.** He did not say to himself what many people say: "What is this? He lives in wickedness, cruelty, and inhumanity, enjoys everything more than he needs, and does not endure even mental distress or any other of the unexpected troubles (of which many afflict mankind), but gains pure pleasure; but I cannot obtain a share even of necessary sustenance. Everything flows to him as if from a fountain, although he spends all his good on parasites, flatterers, and drunkenness; but I lie here an example for onlookers, a source of shame and derision, wasting away with hunger. Is this the work of providence? Does any justice oversee the deeds of mankind?" **He did not say or even think any of these things. How do we know? From the fact that the angels led him away in triumph and seated him in the bosom of Abraham. If he had been a blasphemer, he would not have come to enjoy such honor.**

THE TESTED CHARACTER OF THE POOR MAN - Many people admire the man for this reason only, that he was poor, but I can show that he endured chastisements nine in number, imposed not to punish him, but to make him more glorious; and indeed this came about.

THE COMPREHENSIVE POVERTY OF LAZARUS - In the first place, **poverty is truly a dreadful thing**, as everyone knows who has experienced it; for no words can describe how great the anguish is which those endure **who live as beggars without knowing wisdom.** But for Lazarus this was not his only trouble, but illness was yoked to it, and this to an excessive degree. See how he shows both these misfortunes at their height. Christ showed that the poverty of Lazarus surpassed all other poverty at that time, when He said that Lazarus did not even enjoy any of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. **Again, He showed that Lazarus' illness reached the same measure as his poverty, beyond which it could not stretch out any farther, when He said that the dogs licked his sores. Lazarus was so much weakened that he could not even shoo the dogs away, but he lay like a living corpse, watching them coming without strength to protect himself from them.**

Notice how St. John *makes us see* Lazarus, instead of letting us get away with serenely considering the "awful idea" of Poverty. He makes us see this man, this man, Lazarus by name.

His limbs were so weak, so much wasted by disease, so far consumed by his trials. Did you see both poverty and disease besieging his body to the extreme degree? **If each of these by itself is dreadful and unbearable, when they are woven together, is he not a man of steel who can endure them?** Many people are often ill, but do not lack their necessary sustenance; others live in extreme poverty but enjoy good health; and one good becomes a consolation for the other misfortune. But here both these misfortunes

have run together. But, you say, you can tell me of someone who is both ill and poor. But not in such loneliness. For even if not in his own home, at least in public he could receive mercy from those who see him; **but for Lazarus the lack of protectors made his two misfortunes more grievous. And this lack itself was made to seem more grievous by his position at the gate of the rich man.**

By making us see Lazarus, he also, indirectly, helps us to perceive the cruelty, the self-justifying indifference, of the Rich Man.

For if he had endured such sufferings and been neglected while lying in a desert and uninhabited place, he would not have felt so much distress. If no one had been present, he would have been persuaded even against his will to endure what was happening to him; **but since he did not obtain even ordinary concern from anyone although he lay in the midst of so many drunkards and merrymakers, he came to feel his anguish more keenly** and to same trials as he had; indeed he could not even hear of so much by our misfortunes when no helper is present as when people are present but unwilling to stretch out a hand; and this was his situation at that time. **For there was no one to console him with a word or comfort him with a deed, no friend, neighbor, or relative, not even any onlooker, since the rich man's whole household was corrupt.**

That last line supplies an unexpected twist. Where is this poor man's family? Why are they content to leave him untended? I fear that St. John will soon begin to make us wonder, as members of the Church, why we let people lie uncared for.

In addition to these, the sight of another person in good fortune laid on him an extra burden of anguish, not because he was envious and wicked, **but because we all naturally perceive our own misfortunes more acutely by comparison with others' prosperity.**

I remember a wise Jesuit once quipped: "All comparisons are odious."

In the case of the rich man there was something else which could hurt Lazarus even more. **He received a keener perception of his own troubles not only by comparing his own misfortune with the rich man's prosperity, but also by considering that the rich man fared well in all respects in spite of living with cruelty and inhumanity, while he suffered extreme evils with virtue and goodness.**

Such "bite" in this observation by St. John, and perception.

Because of this he endured inconsolable distress. For if the man had been just, if he had been good, if he had been admirable, if he had been laden with every virtue, he would not have grieved Lazarus; but since he lived in wickedness, and had reached the height

of evil, and was **demonstrating such inhumanity, and treated him like an enemy, and passed him by like a stone shamelessly and mercilessly, and in spite of this all enjoyed such affluence:** think how he was likely to sink the poor man's soul as if with a series of waves; think how Lazarus was likely to feel, seeing parasites, flatterers, servants going to and fro, in and out, running around, shouting, drinking, stamping their feet, and practicing all other kinds of wantonness. **As if he had come for this very purpose, to be a witness of others' good fortune, he lay thus at the gate, alive only enough to be able to perceive his own ill fortune, enduring shipwreck while in the harbor, tormenting his soul with the bitterest thirst so near the spring.**

ALL ALONE IN ONE'S SUFFERING - Shall I name another evil in addition to these? He could not observe another Lazarus. We, for our part, even if we suffer a multitude of troubles, can at least gain sufficient comfort and enjoy consolation from looking at him. **Finding companions in our sufferings either in fact or in story brings a great consolation to those in anguish. But he could not see anyone else who had suffered the same trials as he had; indeed he could not even hear of anyone among his ancestors who had endured as much. This is enough to darken one's soul.**

SUFFERING IN THE TIME BEFORE THE RESURRECTION IS REVEALED - It is possible even to add another evil to these, namely that he could not console himself with any thought of resurrection, but he believed that the present situation was closed within the present life; for he was one of those who lived before the time of grace. But now among us, when so much knowledge of God has been revealed, both the good hope of the resurrection, and the retribution awaiting sinners hereafter, and the rewards prepared for the upright, if some people are so mean-spirited and miserable that they are not upheld even by these expectations, what was he likely to feel, deprived even of this anchor? He could not yet practice any such wisdom because the time had not yet come for these teachings.

SLANDERING THE POOR - There was even something more in addition to these evils, namely that his reputation was slandered by foolish people. **For most people, when they see someone in hunger, chronic illness, and the extremes of misfortune, do not even allow him a good reputation, but judge his life by his troubles, and think that he is surely in such misery because of wickedness.** They say many other things like this to one another, foolishly indeed, but still they say them: for example, if this man were dear to God, He would not have left him to suffer in poverty and the other troubles. **This is what happened both to Job and to Paul.** To the former they said, "You have not often been spoken to in distress, have you? Who will endure the force of your words? Whereas you have instructed many, strengthened the hands of the weak, upheld the stumbler with words, and made firm the feeble knees, yet now pain has

come to you ... and you are impatient. Is not your fear founded in folly?"¹³ What he means is something like this: "If you had done something good, you would not have suffered what you have suffered; but you are paying the penalty of sin and transgression." This was what most distressed the blessed Job. About Paul also the foreigners said the same: for when they saw the viper hanging from his hand, they did not imagine anything good about him but thought him one of those who have dared the utmost evil. This is clear from what they said, "Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."¹⁴ We also often make an extraordinary uproar with words like these.

Nevertheless, although the waves were so great and came so close together, the boat did not sink, but he strengthened himself with wisdom like dew continually refreshing a person lying in a furnace. He did not say to himself anything like what many people are likely to say, that if this rich man, when he departs to the other world, receives punishment and retribution, he has made one for one, but if hereafter he enjoys the same honors as here, he has made two for nothing. Do not you ordinary people use these expressions in the marketplace, and bring the language of the racecourse and the theater into the church?

THE CRUELTY OF IGNORANT THOUGHTS AND SPEECH - I am ashamed, indeed, and I blush to put these expressions before you, except that it is necessary to say these things, **to free you from the disorderly humor, the shame, and the harm that comes from such talk.** Many people often say these things with a laugh, but even this belongs to the evil methods of the devil, **to introduce corrupt teaching into our life in the guise of humorous expressions.** Many people use these phrases continually in workshops, in the marketplace, and in their houses: this is a mark of extreme unbelief, of real mania, and of a childish disposition. To say, "If the wicked are punished when they depart," and not to be thoroughly convinced that they surely will be punished, is characteristic of unbelievers and skeptics. To think that, even if this should happen (and it will happen), the wicked will have enjoyed an equal reward with the righteous indicates the height of foolishness.

What do you say? Tell me. If the rich man departs and is punished hereafter, has he made one for one? How would you figure this? How many years do you want to suppose that he has enjoyed his money in this life? Shall we suppose a hundred? I am willing to say two hundred or three hundred or twice this many, or, if you wish, even a thousand (which is impossible, for, as it is written, "The days of our years ... are eighty

¹³ Job 4:2-6.

¹⁴ Acts 28:4.

years”¹⁵) – but let us say even a thousand. You cannot show me, can you, a life here which has no end, which understands no limit, like the life of the righteous hereafter? Tell me, if someone in a hundred years should see a good dream on one night, and enjoy great luxury in his sleep, will you be able to say in his case “one for one,” and make the one night of those dreams equivalent to the hundred years? You cannot say this. **So, you must think the same way about the life to come.** As one dream is to a hundred years, so the present life is to the future life; or rather the difference is much greater. As a little drop is to the boundless sea, so much a thousand years are to that future glory and enjoyment. What would one need to say more than that it has no limit and knows no end; and as much as dreams differ from the truth of reality, so much this condition differs from that hereafter?

THE HIDDEN INNER LIFE OF THE SELF-SATISFIED AND WEALTHY - Besides, even before the punishment to come, those who practice wickedness and live in sin are punished in this life. **Do not simply tell me of the man who enjoys an expensive table, who wears silken robes, who takes with him flocks of slaves as he struts in the marketplace: unfold for me his conscience, and you will see inside a great tumult of sins, continual fear, storm, confusion, his mind approaching the imperial throne of his conscience as if in a courtroom, sitting like a juror, presenting arguments as if in a public trial, suspending his mind and torturing it for his sins, and crying aloud, with no witness but God who alone knows how to watch these inner dramas.**

THE INNER TORTURE EXPERIENCED BY THE WICKED - The adulterer, for example, even if he is immensely wealthy, even if he has no accuser, does not cease accusing himself within. The pleasure is brief, but **the anguish is long-lasting, fear and trembling everywhere, suspicion and agony.** He fears the narrow alleys. He trembles at the very shadows, at his own servants, at those who are aware of his deeds and at those who know nothing, at the woman herself whom he has wronged, and at the husband whom he has insulted. He goes about bearing with him a bitter accuser, his conscience; self-condemned, **he is unable to relax even a little.** On his bed, at table, in the marketplace, in the house, by day, by night, in his very dreams he often sees the image of his sin. He lives the life of Cain, groaning and trembling on the earth even when no one knows. Inside he has fire always concentrated.

The same happens also to those who practice theft and fraud, to drunkards, and (in a word) to everyone who lives in sin. There is no way to corrupt that court. Even if we do not seek virtue, we still suffer anguish, when we are not seeking it; and if we seek evil, we still experience the anguish when we cease from the pleasure of the sin.

¹⁵ Psalm 89 (90):10.

Let us not say, about the wicked who are rich here and the righteous who are rewarded hereafter, that one makes one, but that two make nothing. For the righteous, both the life hereafter and this life provide great pleasure; **but the wicked and greedy are punished both here and hereafter.** They are punished even here by the expectation of the retribution hereafter, and by the evil suspicion of everyone, and by the very fact of sinning and corrupting their own souls. After their departure from here they endure unbearable retribution.

In contrast, even if the righteous suffer a multitude of troubles here, they are nourished by good hopes, and have a pleasure that is pure, secure, and permanent; and hereafter the multitude of good things will welcome them, just like Lazarus. **Do not tell me that he was afflicted with sores but consider that he had a soul inside more precious than any gold – or rather not his soul only, but also his body, for the virtue of the body is not plumpness and vigor but the ability to bear so many severe trials.** A person is not loathsome if he has this kind of wounds on his body, but if he has a multitude of sores on his soul and takes no care of them.

Such was that rich man, **full of sores within.** Just as the dogs licked the wounds of the poor man, so demons licked the sins of the rich man; and just as the poor man lived in starvation of nourishment, **so the rich man lived in starvation of every kind of virtue.**

WHAT GOD CAN AND DOES DO WITH THOSE WHO ARE POOR - Knowing all these things, let us be wise. Let us not say that if God loved so-and-so, He would not have allowed him to become poor. This very fact is the greatest evidence of God's love: "For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves and chastises every son whom He receives."¹⁶ And elsewhere it is written: "My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast."¹⁷

Let us reject from among us, beloved, these frivolous notions and these vulgar expressions. "Let nothing shameful or foolish or ribald," it is written, "come forth from your mouth."¹⁸ **Let us not only not say these things ourselves; but even if we see others saying them, let us silence them, let us struggle vigorously against them, let us stop their shameless tongues.** Tell me, if you see any robber-chief prowling the roads, lying in wait for passers-by, stealing from farms, burying gold and silver in caves and holes, penning up large herds in his hideouts, and acquiring a lot of clothing and slaves from that prowling, tell me, do you call him fortunate because of that wealth, or unfortunate because of the penalty which awaits him? Indeed, he has not yet been

¹⁶ Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6.

¹⁷ Sir. 2:1-2.

¹⁸ Eph. 5:4, 4:29.

apprehended, he has not been handed over to the judge, he has not been thrown into prison, he has no accuser, his case has not come to the vote, but he eats and drinks extravagantly, he enjoys great abundance. **Nevertheless, we do not call him fortunate because of his present visible goods, but we call him miserable because of his future expected sufferings.**

THE RICH AND GREEDY - You should think the same way about those who are rich and greedy. They are a kind of robbers lying in wait on the roads, stealing from passers-by, and burying others' goods in their own houses as if in caves and holes. Let us not therefore call them fortunate because of what they have, but miserable because of what will come, because of that dreadful courtroom, because of the inexorable judgment, because of the outer darkness which awaits them.

Notice how St. John pairs "rich" with "greedy". One might guess that a person of wealth would have no need to be greedy, because they already have enough and way more than enough for themselves. But it has been my experience, stark and obvious, how often it has been the wealthy, people with financial means surpassing belief, who still don't have enough, and who will steal from others, especially those lacking any means to defend themselves.

Indeed, robbers often have escaped the hands of men; nevertheless, even knowing this, we would have prayed both for ourselves and for our enemies to avoid that life with its cursed affluence. **But with God, we cannot say this; for no one will escape His judgment, but all who live by fraud and theft will certainly draw upon themselves that immortal and endless penalty, just like this rich man.**

*Collecting all these thoughts in your minds, therefore, my beloved, let us call fortunate not the wealthy but the virtuous; let us call miserable not the poor but the wicked. Let us not regard what is present, but consider what is to come.*¹⁹ Let us examine not the outer garments but the conscience of each person. Let us pursue the virtue and joy which come from righteous actions; **and let us, both rich and poor, emulate Lazarus.** For this man did not endure just one or two or three tests of virtue, but very many—I mean that he was poor, he was ill, he had no one to help him. He remained in a house which could have relieved all his troubles, but he was granted no word of comfort. He saw the man who neglected him enjoying such luxury and not only enjoying luxury but living in wickedness without suffering any misfortune. He could not look to any other Lazarus or comfort himself with any philosophy of resurrection. **Along with the evils I have mentioned, he obtained a bad reputation among the mass of people because of**

¹⁹ Compare Solon's words: "Call no man happy until he dies" (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.32).

his misfortunes. Not for two or three days but for his whole life he saw himself in this situation and the rich man in the opposite.

OUR EXEMPLAR, SHOWN US BY CHRIST IN THIS PARABLE - What excuse will we have, when this man endured all the misfortunes at once with such courage, if we will not bear even the half of these? You cannot, you cannot possibly show or name any other who has suffered so many and such great misfortunes. **For this reason, Christ set him before us, so that whatever troubles we encounter, seeing in this man a greater measure of tribulation, we may gain enough comfort and consolation from his wisdom and patience. He stands forth as a single teacher of the whole world, for those who suffer any misfortune whatever, offering himself for all to see, and surpassing all of them in the excess of his own troubles.**

For all this let us give thanks to God who loves mankind. Let us gather help from the narration. Let us talk of Lazarus continually in councils, at home, in the marketplace, and everywhere. **Let us examine carefully all the wealth which comes from this parable, so that we may both pass through the present troubles without grief and attain to the good things which are to come:** of which may we all be found worthy, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.⁶

⁶ John Chrysostom, [*On Wealth and Poverty*](#), ed. John Behr, trans. Catharine P. Roth, Popular Patristics Series, Number 9 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 19–38.

St. John Chrysostom in the Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity

The *Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, edited by McGuckin, John Anthony

"St. John Chrysostom (349–407) by Tenny Thomas

St. John was born at Antioch in Syria of noble parents: his father was a successful civil servant in the bureau of the commander of military operations in the diocese of Oriens, the *magister militum per Orientem*. His father died soon after his birth and his mother Anthusa brought him up.

He began his education under the renowned pagan rhetorician **Libanius**. He went on to study theology under the Syrian theologian **Diodore of Tarsus** and was baptized in 368, after which he spent the next three years as an aide to **Bishop Meletius of Antioch**.

In 371 he was ordained reader and spent time in strict asceticism, though he was forced to abandon the monastic life because of the breakdown of his health.

In 381 Flavian, the newly appointed archbishop of Antioch, ordained John deacon, and then priest in 386. Both as priest at Antioch and as archbishop of Constantinople he won the greatest renown as a preacher; hence his epithet Chrysostomos ("golden-mouthed"), given to him posthumously.

His writings are most notable as expositions of pastoral teaching. His many biblical commentaries became a general model for ancient Christian preaching in the East; they wove together a straightforward narrative style with rhetorical flair and vivid moral instruction.

The most valuable part of his works is perhaps his Homilies on various books of the Bible. He particularly emphasized almsgiving and was most concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He often spoke out against abuse of severe disparities of wealth and poverty in the cities of the empire, and the main themes of his discourses were

eminently social, explaining the proper manner of a Christian's conduct in life.

In 387 after a riot in Antioch had destroyed statues of the emperor, threatening to bring down military punishment on the city, John delivered a series of passionate appeals for clemency (*Homilies on the Statues*), and his reputation was established.

Against his wish, he was made archbishop of Constantinople in 398, and immediately set about the work of reforming the city, where the decadent standards of the court had been encouraged among the clergy by the worldly and princely style of his predecessor. His outspokenness and asceticism alienated many of the court and clergy, and especially the Empress Eudoxia.

Theophilus of Alexandria saw his opportunity to assert dominance over the capital when Chrysostom gave shelter to the Tall Brothers, monks whom Theophilus had censured and exiled from Egypt because of their Origenism. At the **Synod of The Oak**, held with imperial approval at Chalcedon in 403, Theophilus tried and deposed John for canonical irregularities. The emperor deposed him, though shortly afterwards recalled him from exile.

As soon as he was back in the city he renewed his reform program with even greater zeal, earning the undying enmity of the empress.

He was exiled again, on the specious grounds that he had resumed his See after a synodical condemnation without canonical rehabilitation. At first John was sent to Antioch, but later his punishment was increased by an enforced winter march to Pityus, situated on the eastern shores of the Black Sea.

John died in exile on September 14, 407, at Comana in Asia Minor. The Orthodox Church commemorates his feast day on November 13, and again in the company of Sts. Basil and Gregory the Theologian as one of the **Three Holy Hierarchs**."

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Baur, C. (1959) John Chrysostom and His Time. Westminster, MD: Newman Press

Hartney, A. M. (2004) John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City. London: Duckworth.

Kelly, J. N. D. (1995) Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop. London: Duckworth.

Maxwell, J. (2006) Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mayer, W. and Allen, P. (2000) John Chrysostom. London: Routledge."