

St. John Chrysostom
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St. John Chrysostom was born in Antioch in 347. His father was a general and his mother was famous for her piety. John attended university (at the age of 14 – the usual age for those days) and became a monk at the age of 18. Later ordained deacon, priest, and finally consecrated bishop in Antioch, John became archbishop of Constantinople, capital of the Roman Empire. He remains the most famous preacher of the Orthodox Church, a flaming witness to the concern of the Church for the world, for its hungry, its under-privileged. Above all, John realized that starvation was not only a problem of human stomachs, but of human souls as well. He died a martyr's death, imprisoned by the imperial government which was offended by – among other things – his denunciation of the thoughtless luxury of the Byzantine court. The following are extracts from some of his sermons, which earned him the nickname “golden-mouthed” – Chrysostomos. He died in 407.

Heaven is for those who do positive good, not for those who merely abstain from sin.

Prayer must be a raising of the heart and mind to God, not just asking for something.

The world is like a household in which all the servants should receive equal allowances because all men are equal, since they are brothers.

Your chief concern as you walk through public places is that you should not soil your shoes with mud or dust, but you let your soul grovel while you care for your shoes. Shoes are made to be soiled. If you cannot bear it, take them off and wear them on your head. You laugh at that, but I weep for your stupidity.

Look at the sky, how beautiful it is, and how vast, all crowned with a blazing crown of stars! For how many ages has it existed? Like some young creature full of sap it preserves all the shining and freshness of an earlier age, and manifests the beauty it possessed in the beginning, and time has not tired it out.

The night was not made to be spent entirely in sleep. Why did Jesus pass so many nights amid the mountains, if not to instruct us by His example? It is during the night that all the plants respire, and it is then also that the soul of man is more penetrated with the dews falling down from Heaven; and everything that has been scorched during the day by the sun's fierce heat is refreshed and renewed during the night; and the tears we shed at night extinguish the fires of passion and quieten our guilty desires. Night heals the wounds of our souls and calms our grieves.

Abraham was rich, but did not love his wealth; he regarded not the house of this man, not the wealth of another; but going forth he looked around for the stranger, or for some poor man, that he might entertain the traveler. He did not cover his ceilings with gold, but placing his tent near an oak, he was happy with its shade of leaves. Yet so bright was his dwelling that angels were not ashamed to tarry with him; for they sought not splendor of

dwelling, but purity of soul. So let us, beloved, imitate Abraham and give our goods to those who need them.