

NT-MK15

10/21/18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by St. John Chrysostom ¹

When the ten disciples were indignant with James and John for separating themselves from their company in the hope of obtaining the highest honor, Jesus corrected the disorderly passions of both groups. Notice how he did it.

He called to them and said: Gentile rulers lord it over their people, and holders of high office make their authority felt. This must not happen among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to be first among you must be the last of all.

You see that what the two brothers wanted was to be first, greatest, and highest: rulers, one might almost say, of the others. So, revealing their secret thoughts, Jesus put a curb on this ambition, saying: *Whoever wants to be first among you must become the servant of all.* If you wish to take precedence and to have the highest honors, aim for whatever is lowest and worst: to be the most insignificant and humble of all, of less account than anyone else; to put yourselves after the others. It is virtue of this kind that wins the honor you aspire to, and you have an outstanding example of it near at hand. *For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* This is what will make you illustrious and far-famed. See what is happening in my case. I do not seek glory and honor, yet by acting in this way I am gaining innumerable blessings.

The fact is that before the incarnation and self-abasement of Christ the whole world was in a state of ruin and decay, but when he humbled himself he lifted the world up. He annulled the curse, put an end to death, opened paradise, destroyed sin, flung wide the gates of heaven, and introduced there the firstfruits of our race. He filled the world with faith in God, drove out error, restored truth, caused our firstfruits to ascend a royal throne, and gained innumerable blessings beyond the power of myself or anyone else to describe in words. Before he humbled himself he was known only to the angels, but after his self-abasement he was recognized by the whole human race.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1999 – pg 126

10SN2201

10/22/18

A Reading from the First Encyclical of St. John Paul II ¹

The union of Christ with the human person is in itself a mystery. From the mystery is born “the new man”, called to be a partaker of God's life and newly created in Christ for the fullness of grace and truth. Christ's union with the human person is power and the source of power, as St. John stated so incisively in the prologue of his Gospel: “The Word gave power to become children of God”. The human person is transformed inwardly by this power as a source of a new life that does not disappear and pass away but lasts to eternal life. This life, which the Father has promised and offered to each person in Jesus Christ, His eternal and only Son, who, “when the time had fully come” became incarnate and was born of the Virgin Mary, is the final fulfillment of the person's vocation. It is in a way the fulfillment of the “destiny” that God has prepared for each on from eternity. This “divine destiny” is advancing, in spite of all the enigmas, the unsolved riddles, the twists and turns of “human destiny”, in the world of time. Indeed, while all this, in spite of all the riches of life in time, necessarily and inevitably leads to the frontier of death and the goal of the destruction of the human body, beyond that goal we see Christ. “I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me shall never die.” In Jesus Christ, who was crucified and laid in the tomb and then rose again, “our hope of resurrection dawned, the bright promise of immortality,” on the way to which the human person, through the death of the body, shares with the whole of visible creation the necessity to which matter is subject. We are trying to fathom ever more deeply the language of the truth that our Redeemer enshrined in the phrase “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.” In spite of appearances, these words express the highest affirmation of the human person – the affirmation of the body given life by the Spirit.

The Church lives these realities; she lives by this truth about the human person, which enables one to go beyond the bounds of temporariness and at the same time to think with particular love and solicitude of everything within the dimensions of this temporariness that affect human life and the life of the human spirit, in which is expressed that never-ending restlessness referred to in the words of St. Augustine: “You made us for Yourself, Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” In this creative restlessness beats and pulsates what is most deeply human – the search for truth, the insatiable need for the good, hunger for freedom, nostalgia for the beautiful, and the voice of conscience. Seeking to see the human person as it were with “the eyes of Christ Himself”, the Church becomes more and more aware that she is the guardian of a great treasure, which she may not waste but must continually increase. Indeed the Lord Jesus said: “He who does not gather with me scatters”. This treasure of humanity enriched by the inexpressible mystery of divine filiation and by the grace of “adoption as sons” in the only Son of God, through

whom we call God “Abba”, Father, is also a powerful force unifying the Church above all inwardly and giving meaning to all her activity. Through this force the Church is united with the Spirit of God, that Holy spirit promised and continually communicated by the Redeemer and whose descent, which was revealed on the day of Pentecost, endures forever. Thus the powers of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and the fruits of the Holy spirit are revealed in humans. The present-day Church seems to repeat with ever greater fervor and with holy insistence: “Come, Holy Spirit!” Come! Come! “Heal our wounds, our strength renew; on our dryness pour Your dew; Wash the stains of guilt away; Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; Guide the steps that go astray.”

[1](#)The Redeemer of Man – Pauline Books & Media – Boston – 1979 – pg 40

OT=JER20
10.23.18

A Commentary on the Prophecy of Jeremiah by St. Jerome ¹

Jeremiah is also instructed to speak to all the cities of Judah, although the Septuagint does not translate the word *cities*. Lest it seem indecorous to speak to cities from the court of the house of the Lord, to which they are not present. Yet, when he addresses the people and the citizens, he speaks to the cities themselves. And he stands beautifully in the court and the vestibule of the temple of the Lord, that the people may be brought together to hear the words of the prophet through the occasion of praying to the Lord and adoring him. “Do not remove a word”, he is told, even though it may be sorrowful, even though your audience may be incited to rage against you, nevertheless speak what you have been commanded to say, not yielding to the fear that they may persecute you but only to the rule of the Lord!” “Perhaps.” he thinks, “they will listen and be converted.” However, an ambiguous word like “perhaps” cannot be reconciled with the majesty of the Lord but speaks instead of our desire that human free will be served and that it not be compelled from the Lord’s foreknowledge, as though of necessity, to act or to refrain from acting. For it is not because God knows the future that the future comes about, but it is because of what will happen that God knows it before it occurs. Nevertheless, Jeremiah knew that if the Lord warned of bad consequences and the people did penance, they would be repenting for the sake of what the Lord threatened to do to them. Likewise, if the Lord had promised prosperity and the people had then acted with negligence, God would change the favorable outcome for a bad one. Such is what is also found in the Gospel: “I will send my son; perhaps they will respect him”, spoken indeed from the person of the omnipotent God. Furthermore, in the present passage, he says, :Uf perhaps they listen and are converted each one from his wicked way, then after they repent, I will change my punishment and not do to them what I had planned to do because of their evil, but only if they change first.

To us, therefore, the power has been given to act or not to act, with the consequence that whatever good work we desire, will and accomplish, we should refer to the grace of God, who, according to the apostle, enables us to will and to work. If, however, it suffices to walk just once in the law that was given us by Moses, as foolish heretics suspect, why did he add “and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets,” who were sent after the law and not just once but repeatedly, not leisurely and apathetically but continually and carefully? He says, in effect, “I sent my servant to you daily, even throughout the night, but if you refuse to hear him, I will make this house (i.e. the temple of God like Shiph,” where the tabernacle was located. And when the temple is destroyed, the city as well will then be “a curse to all the peoples of the earth,” from which curse the Lord liberated us, as the apostle says: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf,”

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary – O.T. vol XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 =pg 189

OT-JER21
10.24.18

A Commentary on the Prophecy of Jeremiah by Aphrahat ²

By the mouth of his prophet God called the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar, king of kings. For Jeremiah said: “Every people and kingdom that shall not put his neck into the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of kings, my servant, with sword and with pestilence will I visit that people,” Though he was the great King, God does not begrudge the name of kingship to mortals. Though he is the great God, yet he did not begrudge the name of godhead to the children of flesh. Though all fatherhood is his, he has called men fathers too. He said to the congregation, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children,” Though authority is his, he has given people authority one over another. While worship is his for honor, he has still allowed in the world for one human being to honor another. Behold the grace and the love of our good Maker, that he did not begrudge to people the name of godhead and the name of worship, and the name of kingship and the name of authority, because he is the Father of the created things that are over the face of the world, and he has honored and exalted and glorified human beings above all creatures. For with his holy hands he formed them, and with his Spirit he breathed into them. And he became a dwelling place for them from ancient times. He abides in them and walks among them. For he said through the prophet, I will dwell in them and walk with them

² Ancient Christian Commentary – O.T. vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 = [g 193

DEAD-44.DOC
10.25.18

A reading about praying for our dead, from a sermon by Karl Rahner. ³

Because we love our dead and we still love them we must be with them always. But are they also with us? Do they belong to this love and to the celebration of this love? They have departed, they are silent. No word from them reaches our ears; the gentle kindness of their love no longer fills our heart. How quiet the dead are, how dead they are! Do they want us to forget them, as we forget a casual acquaintance on a trip, with whom we exchanged a few insignificant words? If life is not taken away from those who depart this life in God's love, but changed into eternal, measureless, superabundant life, why then should it seem to us that they no longer exist? Is the inaccessible light of God into which they have entered so faint that it cannot penetrate to us down here? Does even their love (and not only their bodies) have to abandon us in order to live with God in his light? Does their silence imitate the silence of their God, to whose home they have gone?

That is the way it is. For God is silent just like the dead. For us to celebrate his feasts in our hearts, this silent God must certainly be with us, even though he seems so distant and so silent. We certainly must love him, too, as we love our dead, the distant and silent dead, who have entered into the night. Does he not give to our love an intelligible answer when we call him to the feast of the heart, and ask him for a sign that his love exists for us and is present to us? And that is why we cannot lament the silence of the dead, for their silence is only an echo of God's silence. But if we keep silent and meek, if we listen to this silence of God's, then we begin to grasp with a comprehension that exceeds our own power to evoke or even to understand why both God and the dead are so silent. Then it dawns on us that they are near us precisely when we remember and pray for them. God's silence is the boundless sphere where alone our love can produce its act of faith in his love. He has veiled his love in the stillness of his silence so that our love might reveal itself in faith. God has apparently forsaken us so that we can find him. For if his presence in our midst were obvious, in our search for him we would find only ourselves. We must, however, go out from

³ From *The Eternal Year*, Helicon Press, 1964, pp. 140-141.

ourselves, if we are to find him where he is really himself. Because his love is infinite, it can dwell openly and radiantly only in his own infinity; and because he wants to show us his infinite love, he has hidden it from us in our finiteness, whence he calls out to us. Our faith in him is nothing but the dark road in the night between the deserted house of our life with its puny, dimly lit rooms, and the blinding light of his eternal life. His silence in this world is nothing but the earthly appearance of the eternal word of his love.

OT-JER22
10.26.18

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St. Augustine ⁴

Remember, then, that Jeconiah, rejected without any fault of his own, ceased to reign and passed into the custody of the Gentiles when the exile to Babylon took place. Now observe the symbol of things to come in the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in advance. For the Jews did not want our Lord Jesus Christ to reign over them, yet they found no fault in him. He was rejected in his own person and in that of his servants also, and so they passed into the custody of the Gentiles as into Babylon symbolically. How then do the people of Israel not now in symbol but in truth, pass into the custody of Babylon? Where did the apostles come from? Were they not from the nation of the Jews? Where did Paul come from? He said, "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Many of the Jews, then, believed in the Lord. From these were the apostles chosen. From these were the more than five hundred brothers, who were allowed to see the Lord after the resurrection. From these were the 120 in the house when the Holy Spirit came down.

But what does the Apostle in the Acts of the Apostles say, when the Jews refused the word of truth? "We were sent to you, but seeing you have rejected the word of God, see, we turn to the Gentiles. The true passage over into Babylon, which was prefigured in the time of Jeremiah, took place in the spiritual dispensation of the time of the Lord's Incarnation, But what does Jeremiah say about these Babylonians to those who were passing into their custody? "For in their peace shall be your peace," When Israel then went into exile in Babylon by Christ and the apostles, what did the apostle say, as though by the mouth of Jeremiah in ancient times? "I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all the people. For kings, and for all that are in authority. So that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty." For they were not Christian kings, yet he prayed for them. Israel then praying in Babylon has been heard. The prayers of the church have been heard, and the kings have become Christian, and you see now fulfilled what was then spoken in symbol: "In their peace shall be your peace," for they have received the peace of Christ and have ceased persecuting Christians, that now in the secure quiet of peace, the churches might be built up and people planted in the garden of God, and that all nations might bring forth fruit in faith and hope and love, which is in Christ.

⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary – O.T. vol XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL, - 2009 – pg 199

The silence of Mary: a reading from the works of Pierre de Bérulle. ⁵

It falls to the Virgin to keep silence. It is her condition, her road, her life. Her life is a life of silence, which adores the eternal Word. Seeing before her eyes, at her breast, in her arms, this same Word, the substantial Word of the Father, to be dumb and reduced to silence by the condition of his childhood, she enters again into a new silence and is transformed by it after the example of the incarnate Word who is her Son, her God and her sole love. And in that way her life goes on, from silence to silence, from a silence of adoration to a silence of transformation.

Mary is in silence, enraptured by the silence of her Son Jesus. One of the sacred and divine effects of the silence of Jesus is to put the most holy Mother of Jesus into a life of silence: a silence that is humble, profound, and that adores the incarnate Wisdom with more holiness and eloquence than the words of either angels or humans. This silence on the part of the Virgin is not a silence of one who hesitates in speech or of one who is helpless: it is a silence more eloquent, in its praise of Jesus, than eloquence itself. And so it is marvelous to see that, in this condition of the silence and the childhood of Jesus, everyone speaks and Mary says nothing at all: the silence of Jesus has more power to hold her in sacred silence than the words of either angels or saints have the power to bring her in and make her speak of things so worthy of praise, things that heaven and earth are at one in celebrating and adoring.

The angels speak of these things among themselves and to the shepherds, and Mary is in silence. The shepherds hurry away and speak, and Mary is in silence. The kings arrive and speak, and make the whole city, the whole state, all the sacred synod of Judea, speak: and Mary has withdrawn and is in silence. The whole state is moved, and everyone is astonished and speaks of the new king sought by the kings, and Mary is in her repose and holy silence. Simeon speaks in the temple, and Anna the prophetess, and all those who await the salvation of Israel: and Mary offers, gives, receives and brings back her Son in silence; so powerful and secretly impressive is the silence of Jesus on the spirit and heart of the Virgin, keeping her powerfully and divinely occupied and enraptured in silence. For, again, during the time of his childhood, we have nothing but these words which have been brought to us about the conduct of the Virgin and about her holiness in regard to her Son and to the things which are reported of him and accomplished in him: But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her

⁵ *Opuscules de piété*, 39, dans *Oeuvres complètes de Bérulle*, Édit. Migne, Paris, 1856, pp. 988-989; reprinted in *Lectures chrétiennes pour notre temps*: 8 1971, Abbaye d'Orval, Belgium (M-77).

heart@ (Lk 2.19). There we see the condition and occupation of the Virgin, there are her daily duties and her life in regard to Jesus during his holy childhood.