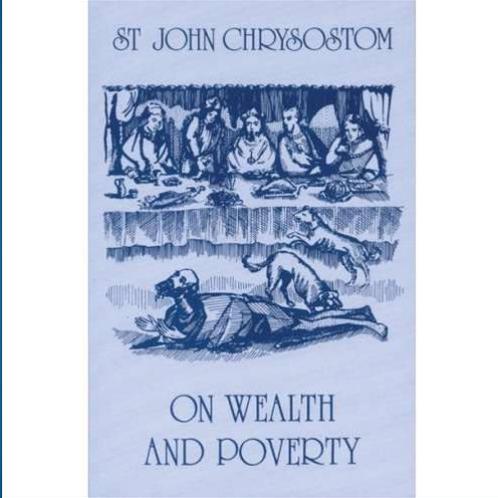


On Wealth and Poverty

St. John Chrysostom



The slide features a blue background with a white wave-like pattern at the top. The title 'On Wealth and Poverty' is written in a large, light blue font. Below the title, the author's name 'St. John Chrysostom' is written in a smaller, white font. On the left, there is a book cover with a blue background and white text. The cover features an illustration of a group of people at a table and a dog. On the right, there is a religious icon of St. John Chrysostom, a man with a halo, wearing a white and red robe, holding a scroll with Greek text.

1

Outline

- Brief Biography
- Style and Influence
- Read the Parable
- Highlights of his Sermons
- Lessons to be Learned
- Suffering Lessens Judgment
- True Meaning and Use of Wealth

2

Brief Biography

- Born in Antioch in 347
- Father died when John was very young; mother raised him and his sister
- Studied to be a lawyer
- Was influenced by Bishop Meletius
- Began to seek an ascetic Christian life devoted to prayer, manual labor and the study of Scripture
- Was ordained a reader
- Desired to live as a monk, but his mother begged him not to until her death

3

Brief Biography

- Finally, lived in caves near Antioch for six years, two of which as a hermit
- Returned to Antioch due to poor health from his intense vigils and fasts
- About 381, was ordained a deacon and in 386, a priest by Bishop Flavian who succeeded Meletius
- Preached for the next 13 years
- Was consecrated at the age of 49 against his will as Bishop and Patriarch of Constantinople in 398 succeeding Bishop Nectarius

4

Style and Influence

- Extremely eloquent and powerful speaker
- Was loved by the people of his day and his sermons were wildly popular
- He would rebuke those who would leave the liturgy with the catechumens after his sermon
- “the people expected him to preach a long and eloquent sermon”
- Criticized excessiveness and extreme wealth that were prominent at the time; Empress Eudoxia took this personally
- Was twice exiled but still encouraged the faithful via correspondence
- Departed on Sept. 26, 407 according to Coptic calendar

5

Rich Man and Lazarus

- ¹⁹ “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.
- ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,
- ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
- ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.
- ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
- ²⁴ “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

6

Rich Man and Lazarus

- ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.'
- ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'
- ²⁷ "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,
- ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'
- ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

7

Rich Man and Lazarus

- ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
- ³¹ But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

8

Highlights of Sermons

- St. John gave a series of seven sermons on the Parable, six of which are included in the book
- First sermon given during Saturnalia celebrations (beginning of civil year):
 - *“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. 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.*”

9

Highlights of Sermons

- *“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 for 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.”*

10

Highlights of Sermons

- First Sermon:
 - Addresses the lives of the two men and their moral qualities
 - Are all the rich condemned and all the poor saved? No.
 - Rich man harmed his own spiritual health by his excessive and self-indulgent way of life
 - Lazarus built up his spiritual strength by enduring patiently and without complaint

11

Highlights of Sermons

- Second Sermon:
 - Addresses the deaths of the two men
 - Death reveals who was truly rich and who was truly poor
 - Rich must consider themselves as stewards of their possessions for the poor; must distribute to the needy
 - If we spend unnecessarily on ourselves, then we receive the same penalty as if we had stolen the money
 - Advocates a return to communal living as in Apostolic times but realizes that people are not ready for it
 - So, focuses on good works, almsgiving, and hospitality

12

Highlights of Sermons

- Third Sermon:
 - Focuses on rich man's request that Lazarus bring him a drop of water and Abraham's response
 - The connection between our misfortune or prosperity in this life and the life to come
 - Can sufferings help us to earn heaven?
 - Not completely, but they help to rid us of sins and their punishment
 - If we are poor or ill, then patient endurance with thanksgiving is enough
 - If we are rich, then we must practice voluntary austerity (moral strictness and simplicity with little or no pleasure)

13

Highlights of Sermons

- Fourth Sermon:
 - Focuses on the rich man's second request that Lazarus should visit his brothers
 - So if we are not visited by someone from the hereafter, why should we believe in a judgment?
 - First, we have Moses, the prophets, and all of Scripture
 - Second, God is just, so whoever does not receive deserved suffering in this life, must endure it afterwards
 - Third, God has given us a conscience for some purpose

14

Highlights of Sermons

- Sixth Sermon:
 - An earthquake had just struck
 - Focused on the need to repent and being mindful of God's judgment
 - The poor must practice patience; the rich must give alms
 - Real slavery is being captive to sin, so a virtuous slave is really free
 - Gives possibility that someone's suffering in this life might outweigh his sin, so he builds a credit of righteousness in heaven

15

Highlights of Sermons

- Seventh Sermon:
 - Condemnation of those visiting the racetrack
 - Apparently unseemly behavior was found there
 - Christians being there were setting a bad example for converts
 - Were also wasting time and losing the blessing of their spiritual training at church
 - Choosing the easy road instead of the narrow gate which reminded him of the rich man and Lazarus
 - Is wealth really a good thing and is poverty evil?

16

Lessons from Lazarus

- **Why is Lazarus a good example for Christians?**
 - Virtue is the true treasure of a man
 - What sets Lazarus apart is not that he is poor and miserable, but rather how he endures his condition
 - He was excessively ill and lonely
 - He saw others much more prosperous than himself coming and going all the time
 - He did not have the consolation of the Resurrection
 - With all of these burdens, we don't hear that he questioned God's providence, complained or blasphemed God

17

Lessons from Lazarus

- *“This man is presented as a teacher for you both. For if he did not complain when he was poor, what pardon will those have who complain when they are rich? If he gave thanks in hunger and so many troubles, what excuse will those have who do not try to approach the same virtue when they enjoy abundance? Likewise, what pardon will the poor have who grumble and complain because they have to beg for a living, when this man, who lived continuously in hunger, poverty, loneliness, and illness in the house of a rich man, ignored by everyone, and could not see anyone else who had endured the same sufferings as he had, nevertheless showed such wisdom?”*

18

Lessons from Lazarus

- Lazarus teaches us not to call the rich fortunate and the poor unfortunate. Indeed a rich man is not the one with many possessions, but the one with few needs.
- A poor man, as well, is not the one with few things, but with many desires. This is the true measure of wealth and poverty.
- *“in the case of wealthy people: let us never consider those people healthy who are always yearning and thirsting after other people’s property; let us not think that they enjoy any abundance. For if one cannot control his own greed, even if he has appropriated everyone’s property, how can he ever be affluent?”*

19

Lessons from Lazarus

- Lazarus gladly and patiently endured to enter through the narrow gate acquiring virtues by his suffering
- We learn from him that we should judge no man lucky before his end
- True wealth is self-control, not the indulgence of our appetites and acquiring possessions

20

Lessons from Rich Man

- **Why is the Rich Man a poor example for Christians?**
 - He was condemned not because of his wealth, but because of how he misused that wealth
- *“None of these things is good, not luxury, not wealth, not excessive clothing; they have only the name of goodness. Why do I say that they have only the name? They often indeed cause our destruction, when we use them improperly. Wealth will be good for the possessor if he does not spend it only on luxury, or on strong drink and harmful pleasures; if he enjoys luxury in moderation and distributes the rest to the stomachs of the poor, then wealth is a good thing. But if he is going to give himself up to luxury and other profligacy [wild extravagance], not only does it not help him at all, but it even leads him down to the great pit. This is what happened to this rich man.”*

21

Lessons from Rich Man

- Surrounded himself with and provided for flatterers and attendants, those who told him what he wanted to hear
- They cared nothing at all about his salvation, but only added to his spiritual infection
- In difficult times, they would abandon him without care
- He ignored Lazarus who was a means of blessing and salvation for him:
- *“He lies at your entrance, the pearl in the mud, and do you not see him? The physician is at your gate, and do you not accept the treatment? The pilot is in the harbor, and do you endure shipwreck? Do you feed parasites, and do you not feed the poor?”*

22

Lessons from Rich Man

- The rich man's prosperity blinded his reasoning and his ability to discern correctly
- His heart was hardened to the misfortune of the man he passed by daily without any regard
- He saw Lazarus with Abraham as a further rebuke to him
- *"God says, 'The earth has brought forth her increase, and you have not brought forth your tithes; but the theft of the poor is in your houses.' Since you have not given the accustomed offerings, He says, you have stolen from the poor. He says this to show the rich that they hold the goods of the poor even if they have inherited them from their fathers or no matter how they have gathered their wealth"*

23

Lessons from Rich Man

- Condemnation of luxury:
 - Sleeping on beds of ivory
 - King David: *"I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears"* (Psalm 6:7)
 - Jacob: earth and stone
 - Spiritual soldiers: smell of virtue rather than scented oils

24

Lessons from Rich Man

- Nothing is worse than luxury:
- *“And elsewhere Moses says, when you have eaten and drunk, ‘take heed to yourself, that you forget not the Lord your God.’ 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?”*

25

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- Some receive all their punishments here and so enter eternity stripped of sin:
 - Lazarus
- Some receive some punishment here:
 - Fornicator of 1 Corinthians
- God allows some just a few difficulties here
- If we are to mourn for anyone, it is for those who live comfortable lives
- So, tribulation brings benefit to all if borne with thankfulness and heedfulness
- One cannot expect to lead easy lives both here and there

26

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- *“But why,” someone asks, “are some punished here, but others only hereafter and not at all here?” Why? Because if all were punished here, we would all have perished, for we are all subject to penalties. On the other hand, if no one were punished here, most people would become too careless, and many would say there is no providence. . . . For this reason God punishes some here, but does not punish others. He punishes some, cutting short their evil ways, and making their retribution hereafter the lighter, or even completely releasing them, and making those who live in wickedness better by the punishment of these people.*

27

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- *“Others, however, He does not punish, so that if they attend to themselves, repent, and respect God’s forbearance, they may be freed from both the punishment here and the retribution hereafter; but if they persist, without benefiting from God’s tolerance of evil, they may undergo a greater retribution because of their great contempt”*

28

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- *“In a word, it is absolutely necessary for one who hopes to please God and to be acceptable and pure, not to pursue a relaxed and slippery and dissolute life [lax in morals], but a laborious life, groaning with much toil and sweat; for no one is crowned, Paul says, ‘unless he competes according to the rules.’ And elsewhere he says, ‘Every athlete exercises self-control in all things,’ in speech and in sight, avoiding shameful words, abuse, blasphemy, and obscenity. From Paul’s words we learn that if trials are not brought to us from somewhere outside, we must exercise ourselves every day with fasting, austerity, cheap nourishment, and a frugal table, always avoiding sumptuousness; otherwise we cannot please God”*

29

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- The lucky man, therefore, is not the one who leads an untroubled and luxurious life here.
- The lucky one is he who uses God’s mercy and patience in this life through repentance, a disciplined life, and generosity to the poor, in order to save himself.

30

Suffering Lessens Judgment

- Tribulation and death are the great equalizers because they remind us of our own mortality:
- *“Have you seen the mortality of the human race? When the earthquake came, I reflected with myself and said, where is theft? Where is greed? Where is tyranny? Where is arrogance? Where is domination? Where is oppression? Where is the plundering of the poor? Where is the arrogance of the rich? Where is the domination of the powerful? Where is intimidation? Where is fear? One moment of time and everything was torn apart more easily than a spider’s web, everything was shattered, the city was full of shrieking, and everyone ran to the church.”*

31

True Meaning and Use of Wealth

- What we are used to: judging by visible masks
- *“. . . so also the rich man often turns out to be the poorest of all. If you take off his mask, open up his conscience, and enter into his mind, you will often find there a great poverty of virtue: you will find that he belongs to the poorest class of all. . . . so also now when death arrives and the theater is dissolved, everyone puts off the masks of wealth or poverty and departs to the other world. When all are judged by their deeds alone, some are revealed truly wealthy, others poor, some of high class, others of no account.”*

32

True Meaning and Use of Wealth

- What then is true wealth?
 - Our virtue, good character and righteous deeds
 - Possessing these brings us eternal wealth
 - Deprivation of these sentences us to true poverty
 - Would never call a rich thief fortunate, even if not yet imprisoned
- To whom do our riches belong?
 - They belong to God and are to be used for our fellow man
 - Misuse causes us to be punished as thieves
 - Deposit of money

33

True Meaning and Use of Wealth

- *“By this we are taught that when we do not show mercy, we will be punished just like those who steal. For our money is the Lord’s, however we may have gathered it. If we provide for those in need, we shall obtain great plenty. This is why God allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indulgence, but for you to distribute to those in need.”*

34

True Meaning and Use of Wealth

- How then are we to use wealth for ourselves?
 - In moderation; avoid excess
 - Bodily needs
 - Avoid self-indulgence of all kinds
 - Exercise self-control and discipline

35

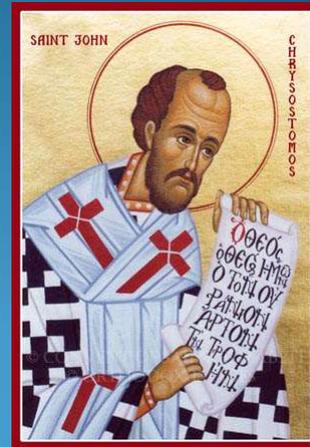
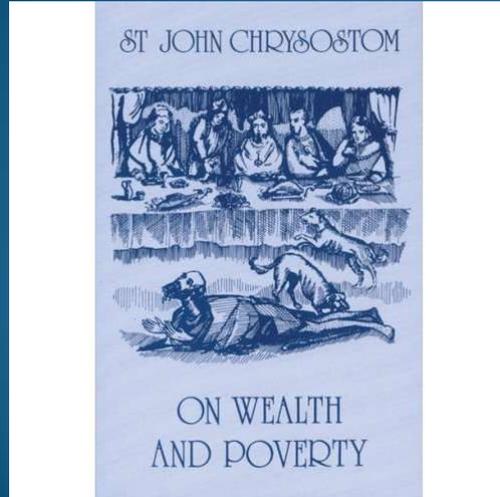
Review

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