

The Life and Times of John Chrysostom — the "Golden" Preacher

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- [0 : 00] So I do want to take a second just to mention to thank each one of you as well for welcoming us back to St. John's. We were married here by David 20 years ago, and we moved out to the valley and we'd been attending church out there for a while.
- So we felt very welcome coming back to St. John's. I also wanted to just mention I don't consider myself an expert in this field in any way. I have a keen interest in church history and theology, and I've read a lot on the patristics.
- So I'm sure there are people in this room that know more than I do on some of these subjects, and we can have an interesting conversation at the end. So I'm not claiming any expertise. But what attracted me to John Chrysostom are a few things, especially as we're celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- John is an important doctor in the church. He is venerated both in the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and even in the Anglican Communion churches.
- He is considered one of the great ecumenical teachers in the Eastern Orthodox, among the three being Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, also known as Gregory Nazianzus.
- [1 : 20] John Chrysostom was quoted most often, one of the patristics quoted most often by John Calvin, next to Augustine.
- In fact, he quoted John Chrysostom frequently. This is something that Calvin wrote, and I think it's key when we consider the whole framework of the Reformation debate.
- The chief merit of our Chrysostom is this. He took great pains everywhere not to deviate in the slightest from the genuine plain meaning of Scripture, and not to indulge in any license of twisting the straightforward sense of the words.
- And that was really what was going on in the time of the Reformation is, what's this text saying? What's the Bible teaching? And John Calvin was trying to recapture, as many of the Reformers were, the plain meaning of Scripture and what it was saying to the early church fathers.
- John was an excellent orator. He was a master of the Greek language. Even modern connoisseurs of Greek literature have called him almost a pure adicist, that the only prose author of speech in his epoch could stand comparison with Demosthenes.
- [2 : 37] He was excellent at oration. He was born... Let's see here. Let's... Next slide here. I'm not doing my part. This is just to give you an idea.
- He was born in Antioch of Syria, not Antioch of Pisidia. This is a prominent city. It was founded by one of the generals of Alexander the Great, Seleucus Nicator.
- And it's founded on the Orontes River. You'll see some pictures later. It was a resort town. Actually, you can switch to the next slide.
- This is the Orontes, and there's this beautiful island, which had a great church and even palatial residences on it. So it was a prominent city.

It was a metropolis. That afforded it certain prominence and certain benefits in the Roman Empire.

[3 : 43] His parents were of Syrian background. His father, Secundus, was a high-ranking military official. With the name Secundus, he probably had Latin background, though.

His mother had a Greek name, Anthusia. And she had John when she was 20 years old. Now, John had an annoying habit when he wrote about his life to round numbers off.

So when he was 18, he'd say he was 20. So for this reason, we don't even know exactly when he was born. They think it was probably about 349. And his mother was 20 and his dad was 40.

That all works out very well. But shortly after John's birth, his father died. And so we have a 20-year-old woman who was left to raise John and his oldest sister.

And she chose to be a widow. She did not choose to remarry. His mother was devout. She was a Christian. She saw the value of education. And she enrolled John in some of the greatest schools.

[4 : 46] Now, John's education followed the classical model of the trivium. I don't know if people are familiar with that. But you start off with rote knowledge, grammar, basic arithmetic, learning just the basic language.

And then the next step would be logic. Now, you have to actually learn to take and synthesize different ideas and put them together. And then the highest was rhetoric. The Greek world, the Roman world, saw a rhetorician as someone to be lauded, someone who could voice what they believed and convince others of the truth of it.

That's the value of rhetoric. He went to one of the greatest schools of rhetoric and studied under a pagan named Labanius. Now, Labanius is described as a convinced pagan devoted to traditional values, openly contemptuous of the new official religion.

Although enjoying good relations with many who professed that, he was a friend and admirer of the apostate emperor Julian and reviewed the progress of Christianity with acute dismay.

I'll come back to say a little bit more about Julian. But Labanius was an affable man in many ways. He wanted to get to know John. He saw, I think, John's talent. And once when he was having a discussion with John about his background, John told him that his mother was a widow.

[6 : 11] So he inquired what his mother's age was and when she was widowed. And when he replied that she was only 40 years old and that she'd been a widow for 20, he was astounded.

And looking around in the public place where they were, he said, Great heavens! What remarkable women are to be found among the Christians. So it was very unusual that she'd remain unmarried at the age of 20, raising two children.

There was also, just to give you another idea of how highly, I think, Labanius regarded John at his death. They were, he was, they were close to his death. They were asking him who would succeed him as chair of rhetoric in the school.

And this is what he said. It ought to have been John had not the Christians stolen him from us. I want to give you a little bit of the background, both historical and theological.

Maybe the next slide. Just giving you here an idea. The geography is helpful a little bit because we're going to talk about his ascetic life as well. But these are the mountains that surround.

[7 : 16] And a lot of the monks and the hermits would go off. John having been one of them. Next slide, please. In the days of Diocletian, the Roman Empire was split.

Because it had become so large it was unmanageable for only old Rome to govern. And so Emperor Diocletian split the empire. And Byzantium was eventually set up as the, which was renamed Constantinople in 330.

By Constantine when he named that new Rome. This is important to keep in mind. Also keep in mind that at that point, this really didn't have any prominence in the Christian world.

There were three, the three patriarchates, traditional patriarchates were considered to be Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome. And Constantinople only came in later.

Because it was really a small town on the Bosphorus at first. Another thing that we need to keep in mind is the theological debates that were going on at the time.

[8 : 24] People I think are probably familiar with Arianism. The Arians denied the full divinity of Christ. They did not see him. This is why we recite the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Constantinople Creed. We say he is of one substance or same substance with the father. The saying, not one iota. I don't know if people know that, comes from that.

Because the Greek word for same and the Greek word for similar is separated by one iota. Right? And the Arians said, oh, we can agree with the he's of similar substance with the father, but the same substance.

And people who wanted to ingratiate themselves to the Arians wanted to go for that. But Athanasius, the great defender of orthodoxy in that thing, denied that and said, not one iota for the Arians.

So this was the situation that was important to realize because Constantinople, being a new city and a metropolis, became a place where a lot of people who were actually Arian sympathizers lived.

[9 : 26] These were the intelligentsia because Arianism made a lot of logical sense. And John came into a milieu where that tension still existed.

When John was 14 years old, Julian the Apostate died. Now, Julian the Apostate, I told you I was going to come back to that. He was raised a Christian, but he apostatized and wanted to restore paganism in Rome.

He did many things to try and frustrate the Christians. He proclaimed religious liberty, but he didn't do it for lofty reasons. He actually loved to see Christians fighting amongst each other.

So he invited all the exiles back, whether you're a heretic or, you know, ultra-orthodox. Just come on back. And he wanted to watch them all kind of fight. He also developed a plan to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Again, not because he particularly loved the Jews, but because he actually thought that by so doing, he could help to disprove the divinity of Jesus. Jesus, because Jesus said this will be destroyed.

[10 : 33] And the Christians would point to that and say Jesus is a prophet. And that really did affect the pagan mind, because they'd say, man, this guy's wielding some power. So Julian goes off to battle. He gets killed. And the Christians celebrated with exultant shouts of, God and his Christ have triumphed.

So this is the early life of John as he's growing up. He had a best friend named Basil. And he seemed to be training initially for something maybe in public service, a high office.

Palladius, who is one of the main biographers of John, says that at one point, becoming intellectually a full-grown man, John fell in love with sacred studies.

He and Basil were very devout and good friends. And they wanted to embrace the life of solitaires and true philosophy together. So they hatched a plan to move and live, cohabitate away from their parents.

But his mother was shocked at this. She said, John, will you make me a widow a second time? And so she convinced him to stay. While he stayed, he became, he came under the influence of Miletios, who was the bishop of Antioch.

[11 : 49] Can you switch the slide, please? This is just another map to give you an idea of Constantinople and Chalcedon. There's Nicaea, Nicomedia.

Next slide, please. Now it's Turkey. And this is Constantinople. So Miletios, I thought I had a picture of him, actually, so I don't know if it came through or not, or maybe the orders.

But I think this one's Miletios. He was the bishop of Antioch.

Okay, so John is still in Antioch at this time. Miletios is a teacher in the church. And John eventually came to be baptized by him.

Now, again, people, just to give you a little church background, back then they saw baptism as kind of a one-off get-out-of-jail-free card. Once you were baptized, you were cleansed and perfect.

[12 : 58] And so people like Constantine deferred their baptism until their deathbed because it's like, hey, I'm in. Right? I got my baptism. But if you got baptized and then you sinned after that, it was a difficult situation for you.

So John didn't get baptized as a child, even though he was raised in a Christian household. And that was common. This wasn't any unfaithfulness on the part of his mother. But children raised in Christian households were considered catechumens already.

They didn't have to go through the same rites, so to speak, as a pagan who was coming to the faith would have to do. So he was baptized by Miletios. And then Palladios wrote, From that hour of his baptism, John ever swore or ever made others take oaths, ever spoke evil of anyone, or told lies or cursed or tolerated frivolous talk.

So he's an idea of the rigorousness of the man. Now, there's probably some hagiography here. John eventually came to study under Diodor and Cartierios, who were in charge of an ascetic school.

This is... Oh, wait a minute. That might be Miletios. Go ahead. This is Diodor, I think.

[14 : 14] No, this is Slavian. Just, that's fine. Diodor was basically the man that gave John his love for scripture.

Diodor led the school of Antioch, which was a very different school than Alexandria. Alexandria preferred the allegorical method of interpreting scripture. Everything was typological.

Things had mystical meanings, spiritual meanings. The plain meaning of the text was not that important to them. They would take it into consideration, but in the school of Diodor, he said, no, no, no.

It's the historical context, the plain meaning of the text that matters most. And this obviously impressed John. Diodor eventually became actually Bishop of Tarsus. He was...

When he was going to the school, it wasn't a monastery per se, but it was rather a close-knit fellowship of dedicated Christians, staying in separate homes, but living together. Sorry, living in the world, but they accepted self-imposed rules of rigorous self-denial.

[15 : 24] And they had... They would pray. They would study the Bible. They would sing and worship together. John began to write short essays during this time, one of them known as a king and a monk compared, where he argued that a monk who wholly surrenders to God is a true king.

And this is something that, you know, you have to think again about how new this religion was to the pagan world and how radical that would have been. But he never really broke fully free of his philosophical underpinnings.

And this is something that we all need to appreciate. And it's true of us as well, right? Is that the milieu in which he grew up, he tended to sort of argue more in stoic terms at times with a Christian way about it.

After serving Miletios for three years, he was then appointed an official reader in the church. Now, this is the lowest form of clergy. It was just below deacon.

Okay. And they weren't allowed to preach. He would have... He would read the Old Testament lesson and epistle at mass, but... And then aid in the other tasks of the clergy.

[16 : 35] He was still living at home at this time. And then he and his friend Basil received word that frightened them that they were both going to be ordained priests under duress.

And this was actually not uncommon back then. Rather, and it's an interesting way, they would come and they would basically say, that's it, we're making you a priest. And they would practically force it upon you.

This terrified John. And Basil and John came up with a plan that they would both basically do what the other one did. So if Basil... If they got Basil, then John would say yes. And if Basil said no, then John would say no.

But John had no intention of becoming a priest at that time. So he used a ruse. They got Basil. John took off. This, of course, hurt Basil.

But John felt that he was utterly unworthy at that time. He realized that in his heart, he was still struggling with vicious passions. And so he then fled.

[17 : 40] And it was only in a closeted life that he... And avoidance from certain things, like frequent meetings with women, prevented from...

And the matters of the world that he would be able to prepare himself for the priesthood, so to speak. Or shall we say, that God would prepare him for the priesthood. Because he couldn't accept it at that time. So he retreated to Mount Silipios.

And no, no, no. Don't... Because if you go back, maybe go back to that slide over, Antioch, where the mountains were, but he would have retreated to one of these mountains.

Go back one more, maybe. One more. One more. Anyway. So, yes. These mountains here, where these hermit communities lived.

Now, I want you to understand, there were two different types here, okay? There were monks that kind of lived in connection with the other, and then there were complete solitary hermits. Like, they were the, you know, the Navy SEALs, if you will, of this type of lifestyle, okay?

[18 : 47] So, John lived for four years in one of these communities. They lived in these little huts. They were very basic. Some of them had no roofs. They would just have straw. They would... They followed the rule of silence, except for worship.

And they would get together and worship four times a day. Between those times, they were expected to be meditating on scripture, praying, or doing menial work. And that could be anything from planting, harvesting, weeding baskets.

And then they would sell some of the things that they made and use the profit to help the poor. John fretted when he got there. He said, I couldn't stop fussing in trying to discover where I'd get my supply of necessary items, whether I'd be able to eat fresh bread each day, and whether I'd be obliged to use the same oil for both my lamp and my food, whether I'd have a wretched diet of lentils forced on me, and be assigned some back-breaking task.

Being ordered, for example, to dig or carry logs or water or perform all sorts of services of that kind. In a word, my great worry was about the time that would be allowed for me to... for spiritual recreation.

So what he was saying is, it's not... Although he was used to the amenities, he was also saying, I wanted to spend more time in the word. But he did this for four years to his credit.

[20 : 03] And during this period of time, he felt like he achieved the, shall we say, the conquest of the flesh that he was seeking for, but it still wasn't quite good enough.

So then he went and joined the Navy SEALs. So four years with these guys, now two more years alone. And these two years were interesting and also had lasting effects on him because during those two years, he never laid down.

They would avoid sleep, and they would... It was called stasis, and they would actually stand all the time. And he memorized the New Testament and the Old Testament.

During this time. So he became, obviously, a great student, a master of the scriptures, but at the same time, he damaged his body. He was incredibly emaciated.

He... His kidneys weren't functioning properly, and for the rest of his life, he suffered from rushes of blood to the head, stomach trouble, insomnia. He couldn't keep himself warm, probably had no insulation to his body.

[21 : 14] This, again, I think, is coming from one of the... Maybe the... The ways that they viewed the world. They saw, in a sense, joy as a zero-sum game. If you're too joyful here, you're taking something away from heaven.

Right? Paul said he was content in little and in much. And I don't know if John was content with much or knew how to use much. So for the rest of his life, he bore this in his body, but he also shunned the riches of the world.

And with good effect, but it also had problems because he's alienating people, and we'll come back to that. Some people postulate that he became disillusioned with monastic life, and that caused him to return to Antioch, but that doesn't really jive, I think, because he wrote and always spoke highly of monks, and he even used, once he became ordained, used them in regular ministry.

It was more likely that he realized he was going to die if he stayed up there. And he also, I think, God probably impressed upon him, look, you've got this wonderful wealth of knowledge now, the Bible, go forth and preach.

And he was a gifted orator, so God wanted to use him. So he returned to Antioch, and when he got there, there was political shiftings going on. And the Arianizing Emperor Valens died, and then his younger nephew in the West, Gratia, was actually Orthodox, and he called Theodosius out of retirement, he was a general, to be the new emperor of the East.

[22 : 50] So Theodosius comes and takes office, and John returns to Antioch, and shortly after that, Miletios died.

Now, not to go into all, but there was a lot of tension, even among the Orthodox. There were some super rigorous Orthodox people that didn't want to associate with people like even Miletios, because they thought that they were a little bit too, they were compromised a bit too much with these Arians.

And one of those names was Apollinus, and he was the favorite to become bishop, but instead, Flavian was installed as bishop. So we can skip ahead.

This is Flavian, I think. Yes, Flavian. Okay, so Flavian becomes bishop. But Rome wasn't happy with this, by the way. They refused to recognize Flavian initially. And so in a sense, Antioch as a city was in schism, and John was then ordained deacon when he first returned.

Deacons would help in the instruction of catechumens. They would also help in the baptismal service, and they did a lot of pastoral work, like helping out with the poor, the sick, mentally deranged.

[24 : 21] They would visit the widows, the orphans. And so John put his hand to working among the people and had a heart for the poor. Five years after that, Flavian ordained him as priest in 386.

Now, his first sermon was interesting because John, I think, was a truly humble man. He was, although a gifted orator, he writes that he was just a stripling and that he was panic-stricken and quite inexperienced in public speaking and that he should have such a height of authority put upon him.

But he took it as an opportunity to then turn to Flavian and extol the virtues of his bishop. He had great regard for him. And by this neat transition, he switched and he made a fulsome eulogy of Flavian.

With extravagant hyperbole, he extolled the bishop's disdain for high living and riches, his absolute self-mastery, his austerities, his vigilant care for the church, his virtues, which no human voice but only one inspired by the Spirit could express.

He said that the loss of Miletios had been difficult, but Flavian seemed like Miletios restored. John concluded he begged the people to pray for Flavian, our father, our master, our shepherd, and our pilot, and for himself, once solitary but now dragged into the limelight with this formidable crushing yoke placed on his shoulders.

[25 : 45] So he didn't have, he didn't come across as an arrogant man in his preaching, even though he was very gifted in that area.

His sermons were practical, they were exegetical, he would go through entire books of the Bible. He preached, for example, 67 homilies expounding Genesis.

He wanted to take his congregation through every book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. His eloquence was so great that the audience often burst out into applause and he would have to chide them, but then he would chide them with such eloquence that they would applaud again.

He didn't pull punches. John, and he was the kind of man that I think he in a sense earned it with his life. You couldn't find fault in him. When somebody, there was problems with drunkenness, of course, in the city and some people said stay away from wine, they wanted prohibition.

But he preached a sermon on 1 Timothy 5, 22, drink a little wine for your stomach's sake and then he criticized our simpler brothers is what he called them. Calling for prohibition, pointed out that wine, he pointed out that wine was God's creation and that the sin lay in the immoderate indulgence.

[26 : 59] He called on Christians who encountered someone blaspheming against God because he saw this as, okay, if you're calling wine evil and God made it, then you're calling God evil. And he said, then rebuke them sharply and if necessary, strike them in the face.

Make your fist holy by the blow. This is not John because he indulged, overindulged in wine himself. He didn't, but he saw the theology, right?

The theological implications this had, that something that was created by God can be called evil. That was an affront to God himself and he stood up for God's honor. Wine's good too, but something, the next thing that happened was very pivotal, I think, in John's career.

Go ahead, one here. This is Theodosius. He preached a series of sermons called Homilies on the Statues. What happened was, in Antioch, this was in 387, a tax was to be levied against the citizens.

And it was deemed exorbitant. The people were dismayed by this and then a riot broke out. And during that riot, images of, and statues of the emperor were cast down and defaced.

[28 : 14] And that was viewed as a direct affront to the emperor. That was treason. And this put the entire city under ban in a sense. They lost their status as a metropolis.

It was given to Laodicea. They lost the free distribution of bread to the poor. People were rounded up and executed. It was kind of like Nineveh. Everyone was going around in sackcloth and ashes and they were waiting for the emperor to decide what he was going to do.

And Theodosius, although a Christian, and he was, keep in mind, three years later when an uprising arose in Thessalonica, he ordered thousands killed.

So he wouldn't hesitate to use his power if he so decided. This was a time of great consternation. The city was as though dead.

No one was going out. People were being dragged away. The monks actually came down from the mountains to console the people. And Flavian went to Constantinople to beg for mercy.

[29 : 18] So you've got, your bishop's gone. Who's the big guy at home? Well, it's John. Right? And he starts preaching sermons to comfort the people of what to, you know, expect.

But what's interesting is they never, and I think that this is hard for us, they never presumed upon the grace of Theodosius just as we should not presume upon the grace of God.

And they never belittled the wrong that was done. They actually confessed that this was heinous and worthy of whatever we get, so to speak. Flavian went and when he came to Theodosius, Theodosius said to Flavian, and this is interesting, I'm going to quote some of this here because I think it's important and helpful, but he says this to Flavian.

Flavian was in tears when he sees Theodosius. And Theodosius says to him, and he wasn't saying this bombastically, he says, was it fair that I should receive such a reward as this and from what I have done for them?

Because he showed favor to Antioch. Right? What injustice have I done that I could avenge myself, avenge themselves on me in this way? What accusation, great or small, could they bring against me and not only against me but also against those who are now dead?

[30 : 33] He says, I have preferred Antioch even before the city in which I was born and has always been my great desire to visit that city and that I have made a public declaration of my desire. So he had an affection for Antioch and he's going, how do I deserve this?

Help me to understand this, Flavian. At this, Flavian groans deeply and weeps even more. The yoke has suddenly become heavier on him. Theodosius is saying, help me to get this.

And then he opens by saying, your majesty, we fully admit the love which you have shown our city. But then he goes on to impress upon him. Think of the impression that will be left in the minds of posterity if they hear that when so great a city was liable to punishment and vengeance and all were in terror and among the generals and rulers and judges there was not a single one who dared to lift up his voice on behalf of those wretched criminals.

One single old man entrusted with the authority of the priesthood came forward and just by his presence and by the mere fact of meeting with him changed the mind of the emperor and that what the emperor was unwilling to grant to any other of his subjects he accorded to this one old man out of respect for the laws of God and I as an ambassador not only from the citizens of Antioch but also from the common lord of all angels and messengers to remind your grace and clemency that if you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly father will also forgive your trespasses.

So I bid you remember that day on which you shall have to give an account for all that we have done. These are bold words. He's using the word of God and he's coming with humility.

[32 : 09] Right? I urge you to imitate your lord and master who though we daily treat him so ill never ceases to pour down upon us his own gracious gifts. At this the emperor was holding back his own tears.

He is choked. And I love how the emperor responds. He says it is nothing so very great or wonderful if we give up our anger against men who have so insolently done us wrong since they are men and we too are men.

Seeing that the lord of the whole universe when he came down to earth was made a slave for our sakes and was crucified by those on whom he had showered such great benefits prayed to his father for those who crucified him saying forgive them for they know not what they do.

Is it then anything strange or remarkable if we forgive our fellow servants? What an amazing piece. The bishop was then eager to stay in Constantinople because this was at the time of Lent by the way I forgot to mention that.

To stay in Constantinople for Easter but the emperor would have none of it. He said you know what no no no it's not good that we sit here and celebrate Easter together as much as I would want to do that but Antioch's going to be in mourning unless you give word to them.

[33 : 16] I want you to make haste and go there now. Tell them I've forgiven them and let them celebrate Easter as well. So Flavian goes off he says be of good cheer for once they see the helmsman they will remember the cruel storm no more they will erase from their minds every memory of the sorrows that are past.

So keep in remember John is still at home now right and he's preaching these things and then when he comes to realize what's happened he preaches a sermon and he says is it possible to imagine a more gentle disposition than that of this man meaning Theodosius?

From now on let the pagans be ashamed. So he's using this now as a as an evangelistic message because people were flocking to the churches even the pagans were afraid and going maybe this will work because we're going to be executed and he called upon them to take heed at the power of the gospel and let the leave the way of error which had come down from their fathers and he says did ever any gentle father take such trouble about his children and rebellious and insolent children at that.

Think about the attitude we have toward our sin right? We tend to minimize it to God and to each other don't we? Right? We presume upon grace Flavian told it how it was admitted their fault and he won the emperor.

I'm going to skip a little ahead here I don't know which time we've got here John continued in the priesthood in Antioch for about ten years in October 397 he received an urgent summons from the governor of Antioch to present himself immediately to the martyr's gate and then they drove him 25 kilometers away not telling him anything and they said oh by the way you're going to be made bishop of Constantinople they did it this way because they probably feared John would take off thinking he's not worthy of that or that the people would riot because they loved him and they were oh my goodness they're taking our John away but in the end he acquiesced and this is important to remember that there was there was always political wrangling going on the patriarch of Alexandria who was a prominent patriarch as I mentioned earlier wanted his own man in there and didn't get it and this shall we say clash that John now had with Theophilus would have greater ramifications down the road while he was a bishop he didn't live as other bishops he had a very high standard of morality maybe you can skip ahead the next slide this is

[36 : 12] Arcadius Arcadius and Eudoxia are the Arcadius is the emperor and Eudoxia is his wife so he he wanted to have a strict strictly orthodox bishop in place to help clean up the Aryan mess that was going on in Constantinople and this is what John did in addition to living this life of good example he had he continued to live in austerity he would not eat with other people he ate simple meals he would just eat you know soup and bread and this kind of was odd but it also offended people and I think this is another weakness in maybe John's understanding because one thing we should be doing is showing hospitality but John wouldn't do that he saw this as extravagance so when people came to visit dignitaries and stuff he'd be off somewhere eating alone and he would never have a big gathering with these people I think that was a weakness in his understanding but he also had a very strong heart for the needy he preached against the extravagance of the rich and the neglect of the poor

I was going to show you guys a book I can pull it out at the end that I owe a lot of this talk to by Kelly and he says this John saw the prominence of the church or the centrality of the church as important in helping the poor Kelly writes what is interesting to modern students is that he always envisaged the voluntary charity of individuals as being the agent of such a redistribution it never occurred to him though he is often described as almost a socialist that the central government should have any responsibility for it and this is something I think we need to recapture when the church abdicates her authority or her ministry to the poor to the government then we lose our gospel witness as well and John would never have envisioned oh wait a minute the government actually starts to do this no he built hospitals he built poor houses they took care of the widows and the poor skipping ahead these are the patriarchates now as I said to you

John this is Constantinople he's from Antioch John did much to build up the sea of Constantinople Byzantium was not really mentioned in the Bible it didn't have a lot of claim to fame ecclesiastically it's believed that Andrew Peter's brother brought the gospel there but one of the ways in which they would do this is by bringing in relics so you had more relics than this built you up and I wanted to quote about something because Empress Eudoxia gets a bad rap and a lot of it I think she does deserve but she was also a devout woman and she participated in one of these processions as just a regular person and he lauded her for that he said he said that she would be called in an extended climax he apostrophized Eudoxia personally assuring her that not only the present but all future generations would proclaim her blessed for her unparalleled devotion to the holy martyrs and for the humility with which casting aside all pomp and circumstance and mingling on equal terms with the common people she had accompanied them to their shrine so

Eudoxia was a mixed bag like we all are a lot of people make her out to be this villainous John and her had a falling out they had a couple actually at one point there was this was common practice if someone was found guilty of treason then not only were they banished or perhaps executed but their entire property their family to be thrown out was taken away from them well this widow effective widow because the husband apparently was wrongly accused and convicted of his crime lost everything except for a small vineyard which Eudoxia liked and she appropriated that as well and John preached about Jezebel and everyone recognized what he was talking about I don't know if you can click the next slide there this is a famous painting of John there's Eudoxia calling her Jezebel for taking this poor widow's vineyard I'm letting you know this and there are other examples of this as well where John was not necessarily delicate in how he approached things he wasn't a good politician and so he would be very uncompromising in these things and this had ramifications on him another significant event that happened was the monks came from

Egypt and this is where Theodosius comes back in or sorry Theophilus comes back in Theophilus had excommunicated these monks charging them with originism and I won't go into that we don't have the time but he charged them with originism and they were excommunicated but they felt that they were wrongly accused but what do you do so they went all the way from Alexandria go back one more slide Alexandria way down here these guys make their way all the way to here and they're trying to appeal to John to intervene and to the emperor and the empress and they make their case but Theophilus is not happy he sees this as an infringement John prior to this had gone through Asia go back to the map gone through Asia he was invited to solve some problems in Ephesus which was a new thing for the bishop of Constantinople to oversee

[41 : 49] Ephesus but he was invited and he went and he actually deposed some bishops for simony and did some various things and he made some enemies and he did it indelicately so when these monks came appealing to John Theophilus said wait a minute this is a local matter who are you to butt into my business and John however was not trying to butt into his business he wrote a very winsome letter just kind of like it made me think of Philemon he says with a personal letter to the patriarch he couched in warm and conciliatory terms begging Theophilus to receive the monks back into communion with him but he did not commune them rumor got back to Alexandria that he did so that infuriated Theophilus all the more and Theophilus was a scheming ambitious man remember he didn't get his man in to Constantinople and John was the usurper so to speak so he hated John all the more now because of this and he set out to plot against him meanwhile these monks made their case to the emperor and the empress and they called Theophilus to come to the capital and either exonerate these men or try them openly because the charges didn't seem to stick

Theophilus got there a year later it was over a year he took the long circuitous land route as opposed to the more direct sea route to get there and he did it very deliberately he took a long time to leave and when he left he went along the way and he spread rumors that he was on his way to Constantinople to try John and he drummed up all kinds of false accusations against anybody who had any grievance against John as he was going through Asia he found all kinds of people he went and deposed a bunch of bishops and stuff yes John did this John did that so he's getting this dossier together and all of these witnesses to come and he's got all the dirt and along the way he's collected this entourage of bishops and they arrived with some 36 bishops 29 of whom were from Egypt they were his own guys and they arrived you can skip ahead one more that's Theophilus and by the way go back that's the only picture of Theophilus

I could find I don't think they actually see him very often but go ahead this is origin go ahead yeah here we are so he comes up here and he stops in Calciven right across he doesn't come across and John refuses to stand as a judge over Theophilus and John starts to write to Innocent of Rome at this point the bishop of Rome was not viewed as the final pope of authority it was more for moral support he was starting to write to the west he's going I'm getting into hot water here what do I do he's asking for advice he writes this to Pope Innocent aware as I was of the laws of our fathers respecting and honoring this man meaning Theophilus having more over in my hands a letter of his which demonstrated that judicial cases may not be lawfully tried outside the territory of their origin in other words he would have had to have gone down to Alexandria but that matters of affecting each province should probably be settled within that province

I refuse to act as his judge indeed I rejected their proposal with the utmost vehemence so this irritated the court the imperial court they wanted this problem resolved you got all these refugees coming in from Egypt saying they won't commune us help us and John won't stand as judge and try and resolve the issue Theophilus took opportunity here and he says okay well if John is not going to judge me I'll judge him so he sends this dossier over to Arcadius and says look at all the stuff that I've drummed up on John Arcadius is like whoa okay well if this is all true let's reverse things and so now John was suddenly on trial and he set up a trial across near just on the outskirts of Chalcedon called the Oak and they tried John on numerous charges none of which were fully substantiated things ranging from violence and cruelty unjustly suspending or deposing clergy inappropriate financial administration liturgical omissions and improprieties all kinds of things they even tried to accuse him of this is funny refusing to eat with others so that he could eat on his own gluttonously that was what it was all about he was just picking out you have soup and buns

I've got some prime rib in the back it didn't go well for John John refused to participate he and they brought the charges and in the end the Arcadius the emperor acquiesced and agreed to banish John John was then taken he didn't get far go ahead one slide I think well we'll just leave it there John didn't go back one sorry John didn't get far he went across the bosporus and was sitting somewhere around here near Nicomedia or sorry Nicomedia is here not on that map and there was a huge public uprising riots violence but what I think changed the wind for him at that point was that there was a disaster that happened and some authors reported as an earthquake but more likely what happened is the empress herself had a miscarriage and she had a falling out with John remember about the whole vineyard that was sort of patched up but there were these tensions and so she then begged her husband to have John reinstated she sent an agonizing note to

[47 : 43] John protesting before God that she had no part in the plot which these wicked depraved people had concocted against him and she deeply revered him as the priest who had baptized her children and incidentally he had baptized Theodosius the second her only son the future emperor so John then returned in triumph to Constantinople done deal right no the problem was that he was convicted by a synod and in order to get that overturned he needed another synod so he came back but he refused to go and resume his episcopal duties until that was overturned because he was in this kind of legal limbo the emperor calls you back but the church hasn't rescinded the order and so Theodosius sends out a bunch of letters and he's like okay we gotta get another synod together right now and get this overturned well he got a bunch of bishops together but it was kind of more of an informal gathering and they annulled the verdict of the previous one but it wasn't an official synod according to canon law and so

John kind of acquiesced to this because it seemed like the political pressure was on him and people were actually still very unhappy that he wasn't resuming his duties that he acquiesced and he retook up the episcopal office during this time it was kind of a tense piece and something else happened the empress was named Augusta now this is something as a bit of a background just being the wife of the emperor did not make you Augusta getting that title was an honorary title but it allowed your image to be put places publicly and adorned and what not and so a statue that silver statue of hers was erected and they had a big festival it was on a porphyry platform and this festival was happening close to the church and it interrupted mass how do you think John viewed this well instead of courteously asking for the celebration to be discontinued he lost his temper and then in a public address he complained that these nausea entertainments were an insult to the church the empress didn't view this kindly she then immediately said we need to get rid of him she had a change of heart she wanted to get rid of him and now she wanted to get rid of him because he dared to resume his episcopal office without a proper synod overturning the previous thing she conveniently forgot that she was the one who was trying to get him to come back in

John preached the sermon about his namesake John the Baptist saying again Herodias is enraged again she dances again she seeks to have John's head on a platter yeah he was pretty direct with his preaching people say well he wasn't really directing that at the empress but you know perception is reality people took it that way the people said well come on and word got back to the palace and that was basically it there was a complete rupture now in the relationship but Arcadius was an indecisive man he was a weak man and he didn't know what to do so they drummed up this old ruling a canon from a council a synod in Antioch 341 that said specifically a bishop who had been deposed by a synod if he resumes his functions on his own responsibility without having first his sentence quashed by another synod he was excluded from office henceforth without possibility of an appeal so they thought this is great we don't even have to have another synod we'll just use this canon to overturn it but there was a problem with that council that council was an

Arian council it was a council actually that was that ruling came out against Athanasius because Athanasius had been exiled multiple times and these Arian bishops got together and said you can't come back unless we have a proper synod inviting you back and so this was never recognized by Innocent for example when they appealed to Innocent to kind of intervene Innocent went said to Theophilus I'm in communion with you and I'm in communion with John I don't recognize this synod this is an Arian synod you can't appeal to that canon but at any rate John was then exiled a second time this time he was exiled go ahead to Armenia Sekunda it's not even on here it's such a small place he got exiled to a small place there called the Kukas and along this path there were raids being done by Isaurian barbarians and he was a man of weak constitution he was now in his 60s and this was in the middle of summer and he was facing all kinds of health problems along the way at one point they actually had to leave where they were staying and flee in the middle of night 77 kilometers away to a place called

Arabesos which was a frontier fortress town because of these attacks and he was staying in a citadel which he deemed to be worse than a dungeon eventually Eudoxia died in another miscarriage but this did not help John because John was in course in Rome and Innocent was trying to resolve the issue many refugees were coming from Constantinople to Rome and pleading you've got to fix things because anybody who was pro John was being kicked out themselves or had to flee so Innocent is trying to get this but again he didn't have papal authority to just come in there and impose anything and when the western emperor Honorius came in and tried to intervene as well this rattled them they were like who are you to come into our territory and tell us what to do and so this actually solidified opposition against John as opposed to helping him in many ways and so John he wrote many letters during that period of time and people were also starting to set this up as a pilgrimage so Antioch so Antioch you can't quite see here but they were coming there to him and then they were coming back telling rapturous stories of how awesome his preaching is and I saw

[53 : 40] John and and this was really irritating people so then they decided okay we're going to push him even further away next slide oh this is innocent go ahead this is where they were going to move him to the farthest reaches of the empire okay so he is sitting right down as I said near here and they're going to force march him all the way over there and I think that the idea was to kill him but not kill him you know it's kind of like Uriah the Hittite just back away and let nature take its course these they force marched him in the summer of 407 some 20 kilometers a day okay these Praetorian guards and whenever they came to a center that had anything like bath houses or places to rest they just moved on and they would stop at these one horse towns and John could not get proper rest or care as he was getting closer to their destination they came near a shrine where there was a martyred bishop there and his name was Basiliskos they he had a vision that night

John did and the saint came to him and said brother John take heart for we will soon be together and then the priest at the shrine where he was got a vision that night and he said you must prepare a place for my brother John for he will be with us soon so they both had visions and then John woke up the next morning dead tired begged his captors to let him rest a little bit longer but they had none of it and they marched him another probably four or five kilometers until he just collapsed and then they brought him back they switched him they dressed him into white robes he took his final communion and his last words were apparently glory be to God for everything and then he died and was gathered to his fathers after his death his supporters were granted an amnesty but that wasn't enough they wanted him to be fully restored posthumously and what they demanded is that his name be included among the diptychs which was a written thing a list of names both people living and dead in the mass to honor them and they wanted him to be included among the bishops in other words he was never really deposed well this caused a huge stink innocent came in and said that's a great idea if you want to be in communion with me you have to put him on your diptychs well

Alexandria didn't like this at first they resisted they were the last to capitulate eventually Antioch did and then Alexandria begrudgingly Cyril the nephew of Theophilus wrote to have that name of that dead man inscribed in the diptychs and then finally in January 438 the remains of John were brought to Constantinople with a magnificent ceremony Theodosius the second their son met the reliquary and when they came to the Bosphorus he knelt down pressed his head against it and asked for forgiveness for the sins of his parents against John John was interred therefore at Constantinople but in the fourth crusade 1204 Venetians seized his remains and took them back to St.

Peter's so his body is now at St. Peter's but I think his head is making the rounds if you go further that's his head and you want more ahead I wanted to just close with one little word from C.S.

Lewis because just to impress upon you this is a book about Athanasius actually but C.S. Lewis wrote the foreword and I just want to encourage you to read the fathers and to learn more about these giants of the faith both from their errors as well as of course their great example because they far outshine us but I love how C.S.

[57 : 54] Lewis puts it if I could just read this to close every age has its own outlook it is especially good at seeing certain truths and especially liable to make certain mistakes we all therefore need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period and that means the old books all contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary most opposed to it nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we now absolutely deny they thought that they were completely opposed as two sides could be but in fact they were all the time secretly united united with each other and against earlier and later ages by a great mass of common assumptions we may be sure that the characteristic blindnesses of the 20th century the blindness about which posterity will ask how could they believe that lies where we have never suspected it and concerns something about which there is untroubled agreement between

Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H.G. Wells and Karl Barth none of us can fully escape this blindness but we shall certainly increase it and weaken our guard against it if we read only modern books where they are true they will give us truths which we knew already where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill the only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds and this can be done only by reading old books not of course that there is any magic about the past people were no cleverer than they are now they are made many mistakes as we but not the same mistakes they will not flatter us with the errors that we are already committing and with their own errors being now open and palpable will not endanger us two heads are better than one not because either is infallible but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction to be sure the books of the future would be just as good as corrective as the books of the past but unfortunately we cannot get at them thank you thank you