

Friends, in line with a Christian tradition which has stretched into the 5th century, this evening I will proclaim the Vigil sermon given by St. John Chrysostom, a sermon preached elsewhere tonight in churches around the world. And if there are words to sum up what I hope his message conveys, it is those words which we say right before communion every Sunday. Whoever you are. Wherever you are on your journey of faith know that you are welcome as you are to receive the blessing of God so freely given. Now the paschal sermon of John Chrysostom.

Are there any who are devout lovers of God? Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival! Are there any who are grateful servants? Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord! Are there any weary with fasting? Let them now receive their wages! If any have toiled from the first hour, let them receive their due reward; If any have come after the third hour, let them with gratitude join in the Feast! And the one that arrived after the sixth hour, let them not doubt; for they too shall sustain no loss. And if any delayed until the ninth hour, let them not hesitate; but let them come too. And they who arrived only at the eleventh hour, let them not be afraid by reason of their delay. For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first. God gives rest to those that come at the eleventh hour, as well as to those that toiled from the first. To this one God gives, and upon another God bestows. God accepts the works as God greets the endeavor. The deed God honors and the intention God commends. Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike receive your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the Table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of the Lord's goodness!

Let no one grieve at their poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that they have fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the

Death of our Savior has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it. He destroyed Hell when He descended into it. He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh. Isaiah foretold this when he said,

"You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below." Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with. It was in an uproar because it is mocked. It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed. It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated. It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive.

Hell took a body, and discovered God. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

O death, where is thy sting? O Hell, where is thy victory? Christ is Risen, and you, o death, are annihilated! Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down! Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is Risen, and life is liberated! Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Christ be Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen!