# Homily 1 on the Gospel of John (Chrysostom)

2. ... **By this Apostle stand the powers from above, marveling at the beauty of his soul, and his understanding, and the bloom of that virtue by which he drew unto him Christ Himself, and obtained the grace of the Spirit. For he has made ready his soul**, as some well-fashioned and jeweled lyre with strings of gold, and yielded it for the utterance of something great and sublime to the Spirit.

3. Seeing then **it is no longer the fisherman the son of Zebedee, but He who knows the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10), the Holy Spirit** I mean, that strikes this lyre, let us hearken accordingly. For he will say nothing to us as a man, but what he says, he will say from the depths of the Spirit, from those secret things which before they came to pass the very Angels knew not; since they too have learned by the voice of John with us, and by us, the things which we know. ..

4. ... He is not of this world, as Christ Himself declares, You are not of the world (John 15:19), and He has speaking within him the Comforter, the Omnipresent, who knows the things of God as exactly as the soul of man knows what belongs to herself, the Spirit of holiness, the righteous Spirit, the guiding Spirit, which leads men by the hand to heaven, which gives them other eyes, fitting them to see things to come as though present, and giving them even in the flesh to look into things heavenly. To Him then let us yield ourselves during all our life in much tranquillity. Let none dull, none sleepy, none sordid, enter here and tarry; but let us remove ourselves to heaven, for there He speaks these things to those who are citizens there. And if we tarry on earth, we shall gain nothing great from thence. **For the words of John are nothing to those who do not desire to be freed from this swinish life, just as the things of this world to him are nothing.** The thunder amazes our souls, having sound without significance; but this man's voice troubles none of the faithful, yea, rather releases them from trouble and confusion; it amazes the devils only, and those who are their slaves. **Therefore that we may know how it amazes them, let us preserve deep silence, both external and mental, but especially the latter; for what advantage is it that the mouth be hushed, if the soul is disturbed and full of tossing? I look for that calm which is of the mind, of the soul, since it is the hearing of the soul which I require**. Let then no desire of riches trouble us, no lust of glory, no tyranny of anger, nor the crowd of other passions besides these; **for it is not possible for the ear, except it be cleansed, to perceive as it ought the sublimity of the things spoken; nor rightly to understand the awful and unutterable nature of these mysteries, and all other virtue which is in these divine oracles.** If a man cannot learn well a melody on pipe or harp, unless he in every way strain his attention; how shall one, who sits as a listener to sounds mystical, be able to hear with a careless soul?

5. Wherefore Christ Himself exhorted, saying, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine. (Matthew 7:6) He called these words pearls, though in truth they be much more precious than they, because we have no substance more precious than that.... And let not us either come near to these while we are sick, but when we have healed our soul, so receive the food that is offered us.

It is for this reason that, after so long a preface, I have not yet attempted to fathom these expressions (of St. John), in order that every one having laid aside all manner of infirmity, as though he were entering into heaven itself, so may enter here pure, and freed from wrath and carefulness and anxiety of this life, of all other passions. **For it is not otherwise possible for a man to gain from hence anything great, except he have first so cleansed anew his soul**.... If you be willing and obedient, He says, you shall eat the good of the land. (Isaiah 1:19) Do you see that **there needs the will only? will— not the common wishing of the multitude— but earnest will. For I know that all are wishing to fly up to heaven even now; but it is necessary to show forth the wish by works. The merchant too wishes to get rich; but he does not allow his wish to stop with the thought of it; no, he fits out a ship, and gets together sailors, and engages a pilot, and furnishes the vessel with all other stores, and borrows money, and crosses the sea, and goes away into a strange land, and endures many dangers, and all the rest which they know who sail the sea. So too must we show our will**; for we also sail a voyage, not from land to land, but from earth to heaven. **Let us then so order our reason, that it be serviceable to steer our upward course,** and our sailors that they be obedient to it, and let our vessel be stout, that it be not swamped amidst the reverses and despondencies of this life, nor be lifted up by the blasts of vainglory, but be a fast and easy vessel. If so we order our ship, and so our pilot and our crew, we shall sail with a fair wind, and we shall draw down to ourselves the Son of God, the true Pilot, who will not leave our bark to be engulfed, but, though ten thousand winds may blow, will rebuke the winds and the sea, and instead of raging waves, make a great calm.