Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom: A 4th-century sermon still preached every Easter in Orthodox churches

by Saint John Chrysostom

The Lord is risen.
He is risen indeed!
If there are devout and God-loving people here,
let them enjoy this beautiful, radiant festival.
If there are prudent servants,
enter joyously into the Lord's joy.
Whoever may be spent from fasting,
enjoy now your reward.
Whoever has toiled from the first hour,
receive today your just settlement.
If any came after the third hour,
celebrate gratefully.
If any of you arrived after the sixth,
have no misgivings, you have lost nothing.
If some have been as late as the ninth,
come forward, do not be at a loss.
If many of you have arrived only at the eleventh hour,
do not be dismayed for being late.

The Master is gracious;
He accepts the last even as the first;
He gives rest to those of the eleventh as well as to
those who have labored from the first;
He is lenient with the last while looking after the first;
to the one He gives, to the other He gives freely;
He accepts the labors and welcomes the effort;
honors the deed, but commends the intent.
So, all of you, enter into the joy of our Lord:
first and second, share the bounty.
Rich and poor alike, celebrate together.
Sober or heedless, honor the day.
Those who fasted, and those who did not, rejoice
today.
The table is full, everyone fare sumptuously.
The calf is fatted; no one go away hungry.
Everyone, savor the banquet of faith;
relish the riches of His goodness.

No one need lament poverty,
for the kingdom is seen as universal.
No one need grieve over sins;
forgiveness has dawned from the tomb.

No one need fear death;
the Savior's death has freed us from it.
While its captive He stifled it.
He despoiled Hades as He descended into it; it was angered when it tasted His flesh.
Foreseeing this, Isaiah proclaimed: "Hades," he
said, "was angered when he met You below."
It was angered because it was abolished
It was angered because it was mocked
It was angered because it was slain.
It was angered because it was shackled.
It received a body and encountered God.
It took earth and came face-to-face with heaven.
It took what I saw and fell by what if could not see.
Death, where is your sting?
Hades, where is your victory?
Christ is risen and you are overthrown.
Christ is risen and demons have fallen.
Christ is risen and angels rejoice. **Christ is risen** and life rules. **Christ is risen** and not one dead remains in the tomb.
For Christ, having risen from the dead,
has become the firstfruits of those that slept.
To Him be the glory and the dominion, forever. Amen.

Excerpt

St. John Chrysostom (the name means "golden mouthed") was one of the most famous preachers and reformers of the second half of the fourth century. He was a priest in his native city of Antioch, Syria, and later became Patriarch of Constantinople. Beginning in 390, he preached a famous series on the New Testament, including ninety sermons on Matthew, eighty-eight on John, and thirty-two on Romans. His reforms to purify the church brought him banishment; he died at age fifty in the year 407 during a forced march into exile.