

COLLECTION

Tractates on the Gospel of John

Augustine of Hippo

2 texts

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STROMATA 28

INTRODUCTION

Delivered to his congregation at Hippo as part of an extended cycle of homilies working verse by verse through the Fourth Gospel, this sermon takes up the feeding of the five thousand and the crowd's attempt to seize Jesus and force a crown upon him. Augustine reads the flight to the mountain as a deliberate refusal of premature kingship, opening into a meditation on the kingdom already reigning hiddenly and the kingdom yet to be revealed. The Tractates on John would shape Latin commentary on the Gospel for a thousand years, supplying medieval exegetes with their habitual frame for reading its signs. Expect the rhythm of preaching rather than the scaffolding of a treatise, patient, conversational, drawing doctrine out of a single gesture in the text.

Following upon yesterday's lesson from the Gospel is that of today, upon which this day's discourse is due to you. When that miracle was wrought, in which Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves, and the multitudes marveled and said that He was a great prophet that came into the world, then follows this: When Jesus therefore knew that they came to seize Him, and to make Him king, He escaped again unto the mountain alone. It is therefore given to be understood that the Lord, when He sat on the mountain with His disciples, and saw the multitudes coming to Him, had descended from the mountain, and fed the multitudes on its lower parts. For how can it be that He should escape there again, if He had not before descended from the mountain? There is something meant by the Lord's descending from on high to feed the multitudes. He fed them, and ascended.

But why did He ascend after He knew that they wished to seize Him and make Him a king? How then; was He not a king, that He was afraid to be made a king? He was certainly not such a king as would be made by men, but such as would bestow a kingdom on men. May it not be that Jesus, whose deeds are words, does here, too, signify some thing to us? Therefore in this, that they wished to seize Him and make Him a king, and that for this He escapes to the mountain alone, is this action in His case silent; does it speak nothing, does it mean nothing? Or was this seizing of Him perhaps an intention to anticipate the time of His kingdom? For He had come now, not to reign immediately, as He is to reign in the sense in which we pray, Your kingdom come. He ever reigns, indeed, with the Father, in that He is the Son of God, the Word of God, the Word by which all things were made. But the prophets foretold His kingdom according to that wherein He is Christ made man, and has made His faithful ones Christians. There will consequently be a kingdom of Christians, which at present is being gathered together, being prepared and purchased by the blood of Christ. His kingdom will at length be made manifest, when the glory of His saints shall be revealed, after the judgment is executed by Him, which judgment He

Himself has said above is that which the Son of man shall execute. Of which kingdom also the apostle has said: When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:24 In reference to which also Himself says: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Matthew 25:34 But the disciples and the multitudes that believed on Him thought that He had thus come immediately to reign; hence, they wished to seize Him and to make Him a king; they wished to anticipate the time which He hid with Himself, to make it known in due time, and in due time to declare it in the end of the world.

That ye may know that they wished to make Him a king — that is, to anticipate, and at once to have manifest the kingdom of Christ, whom it behooved first to be judged and then to judge, — when He was crucified, and they who hoped in Him had lost hope of His resurrection, having risen from the dead, He found two of them despairingly conversing together, and, with groaning, talking with one another of what had been done; and appearing to them as a stranger, while their eyes were held that He should not be recognized by them, He mixed with them as they held discourse: but they, narrating to Him the matter of their conversation, said that He was a prophet, mighty in deeds and in words, that had been slain by the chief priests; And we, say they, did hope that it was He that should have redeemed Israel. Luke 24:13-21 Rightly you hoped: a true thing you hoped for: in Him is the redemption of Israel. But why are you in haste? You wish to seize it. The following, too, shows us that this was their feeling, that, when the disciples inquired of Him concerning the end, they said to Him, Will You at this time be made manifest, and when will be the kingdom of Israel? For they longed for it now, they wished it now; that is, they wished to seize Him, and to make Him king. But says He to the disciples (for He had yet to ascend alone), It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own power: but you shall receive virtue from on high, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth. Acts 1:6-8 You wish that I should manifest the kingdom now; let me first gather what I may manifest; you love elevation, and you shall obtain elevation, but follow me through humility. Thus it was also foretold of Him, And the gathering of the peoples will surround You, and for this cause return Thou on high; that is, that the gatherings of the peoples may surround You, that You may gather many together, return Thou on high. Thus He did; He fed men, and ascended.

But why is it said, He escaped? For He could not be held against His will, nor seized against His will, since He could not be recognised against His will. But that you may know that this was done mystically, not of necessity, but of express purpose, you will presently see in the following: that He appeared to the same multitudes that sought Him, said many things in speaking with them, and discoursed much about the bread of heaven; when discoursing about bread, was He not with the same people from whom He had escaped lest He should be held of them? Then, could He not have so acted at that time that He should not be seized by them, just as afterwards when He was speaking with them? Something, therefore, was meant by His escaping. What means, He escaped? His loftiness could not be understood. For of anything which you have not understood you say, It has escaped me. Wherefore, He escaped again unto the mountain alone — the first-begotten from the dead, ascending above all heavens, and interceding for us.

Meanwhile, He, the one great High Priest being above (He who has entered into that within the veil, the people standing without; for Him that priest under the old law, who did this once a year, did signify): He then being above, what were the disciples enduring in the ship? For that ship prefigured the Church while He is on high. For if we do not, in the first place, understand this thing which that ship suffered respecting the Church, those incidents were not significant, but simply transient; but if we see the real meaning of those signs expressed in the Church, it is manifest that the actions of Christ are a kind of speeches. But when it was late, says he, His disciples went down to the sea; and when they had entered into a ship, they came over the sea to Capernaum. He declared that as finished quickly, which was done afterwards — They came over the sea to Capernaum. He returns to explain how they came; that they passed over by sailing across the lake. And while they were sailing to that place to which He has already said they had come, He explains by recapitulation what befell them. It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Rightly he said dark, for the light had not come to them. It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. As the end of the world approaches, errors increase, terrors multiply, iniquity increases, infidelity increases; the light, in short, which, by the Evangelist John himself, is fully and clearly shown to be charity, so much so that he says, Whoever hates his brother is in darkness; 1 John 2:11 that light, I say, is very often extinguished; this darkness of enmity between brethren increases, daily increases, and Jesus is not yet come. How does it appear to increase? Because iniquity will abound, and the love of many will begin to wax cold. Darkness increases, and Jesus is not yet come. Darkness increasing, love waxing cold, iniquity abounding — these are the waves that agitate the ship; the storms and the winds are the clamors of revilers. Thence love waxes cold; thence the waves do swell, and the ship is tossed.

And a great wind blowing, the sea rose. Darkness was increasing, discernment was diminishing, iniquity was growing. When, therefore, they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs. Meanwhile they struggled onward, kept advancing; nor did those winds and storms, and waves and darkness effect either that the ship should not make way, or that it should break in pieces and founder; but amid all these evils it went on. For, notwithstanding iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, and the waves do swell, the darkness grows and the wind rages, yet the ship is moving forward; for he that perseveres to the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:12 Nor is that number of furlongs to be lightly regarded. For it cannot really be that nothing is meant, when it is said that, when they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs, Jesus came to them. It were enough to say, twenty-five, so likewise thirty; especially as it was an estimate, not an assertion of the narrator. Could the truth be anything endangered by a mere estimate, if he had said nearly thirty furlongs, or nearly twenty-five furlongs? But from twenty-five he made thirty. Let us examine the number twenty-five. Of what does it consist? Of what is it made up? Of the quinary, or number five. That number five pertains to the law. The same are the five books of Moses, the same are those five porches containing the sick folk, the same are the five loaves feeding the five thousand men. Accordingly the number twenty-five signifies the law, because five by five — that is, five times five — make twenty-five, or the number five squared. But this law lacked perfection before the gospel came. Moreover, perfection is comprised in the number six. Therefore in six days God finished, or perfected, the world, and the same five are multiplied by six, that the law may be completed by the gospel, that six times five become thirty. To them that fulfill the law, therefore, Jesus comes. And how does He come? Walking upon the waves, keeping all the swellings of the world under

His feet, pressing down all its heights. Thus it goes on, so long as time endures, so long as the ages roll. Tribulations increase, calamities increase, sorrows increase, all these swell and mount up: Jesus passes on treading upon the waves.

And yet so great are the tribulations, that even they who have trusted in Jesus, and who strive to persevere unto the end, greatly fear lest they fail; while Christ is treading the waves, and trampling down the world's ambitions and heights, the Christian is sorely afraid. Were not these things foretold him? Justly they were afraid, too, at seeing Jesus walking on the waves; like as Christians, though having hope in the world to come, are frequently disquieted at the crash of human affairs, when they see the loftiness of this world trampled down. They open the Gospel, they open the Scriptures, and they find all these things there foretold; that this is the Lord's doing. He tramples down the heights of the world, that He may be glorified by the humble. Concerning whose loftiness it is foretold: You shall destroy strongest cities, and the spears of the enemy have come to an end, and You have destroyed cities. Why then are you afraid, O Christians? Christ speaks: It is I; be not afraid. Why are you alarmed at these things? Why are you afraid? I have foretold these things, I do them, they must necessarily be done. It is I; be not afraid. Therefore they would receive Him into the ship. Recognizing Him and rejoicing, they are freed from their fears. And immediately the ship was at the land to which they went. There is an end made at the land; from the watery to the solid, from the agitated to the firm, from the way to the goal.

On the next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea, whence the disciples had come, saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone; but there came other boats from Tiberias, near unto the place where they did eat bread, giving thanks to the Lord: when, therefore, the multitudes saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. Yet they got some knowledge of so great a miracle. For they saw that the disciples had gone into the ship alone, and that there was not another ship there. But there came boats also from near to that place where they did eat bread; in these the multitudes followed Him. He had not then embarked with His disciples, and there was not another ship there. How, then, was Jesus on a sudden beyond the sea, unless that He walked upon the sea to show a miracle?

And when the multitudes had found Him. Behold, He presents Himself to the people from whom He had escaped into the mountain, afraid that He should be taken of them by force. In every way He proves to us and gives us to know that all these things are said in a mystery, and done in a great sacrament (or mystery) to signify something important. Behold, that is He who had escaped the crowds unto the mountain; is He not speaking with the same crowds? Let them hold Him now; let them now make Him a king. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when did You get here?

After the sacrament of the miracle, He introduces discourse, that, if possible, they who have been fed may be further fed, that He may with discourse fill their minds, whose bellies He filled with the loaves, provided they take in. And if they do not, let that be taken up which they do not receive, that the fragments may not be lost. Wherefore let Him speak, and let us hear. Jesus answered and said Verily, verily, I say unto you, you seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because you have eaten of my loaves. You seek me for the sake of the flesh not for the sake of the spirit. How many seek Jesus for no other object but that He may bestow on them a temporal benefit! One has a business on hand, he seeks the intercession of the clergy; another is oppressed by one more powerful than himself, he flies to the church. Another desires intervention in his behalf with one with whom he has little influence.

One in this way, one in that, the church is daily filled with such people. Jesus is scarcely sought after for Jesus' sake. You seek me, not because you have seen the signs, but because you have eaten of my loaves. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto eternal life. You seek me for something else, seek me for my own sake. For He insinuates the truth, that Himself is that meat: this shines out clearly in the sequel. Which the Son of man will give you. You expected, I believe, again to eat bread, again to sit down, again to be gorged. But He had said, Not the meat which perishes, but that which endures unto eternal life, in the same manner as it was said to that Samaritan woman: If you knew who it is that asks of you drink, you would perhaps have asked of Him, and He would give you living water. When she said, Whence have you, since you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep? He answered the Samaritan woman: If you knew who it is that asks of you drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would give you water, whereof whoever drinks shall thirst no more; for whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again. And she was glad and would receive, as if no more to suffer thirst of body, being wearied with the labor of drawing water. And so, during a conversation of this kind, He comes to spiritual drink. Entirely in this manner also here.

Therefore this meat, not that which perishes, but that which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for Him has God the Father sealed. Do not take this Son of man as you take other sons of men, of whom it is said, And the sons of men will trust in the protection of Your wings. This Son of man is separated by a certain grace of the spirit; Son of man according to the flesh, taken out from the number of men: He is the Son of man. This Son of man is also the Son of God; this man is even God. In another place, when questioning His disciples, He says: Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they answered, Some John, some Elias, some Jeremias, or one of the prophets. And He said to them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matthew 16:13-16 He declared Himself Son of man, Peter declared Him the Son of the living God. Most fitly did He mention that which in mercy He had manifested Himself to be; most fitly did the other mention that which He continues to be in glory. The Word of God commends to our attention His own humility: the man acknowledged the glory of his Lord. And indeed, brethren, I think that this is just. He humbled Himself for us, let us glorify Him. For not for Himself is He Son of man, but for us. Therefore was He Son of man in that way, when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. For to that end God the Father sealed Him. What is to seal, but to put some particular mark? To seal is to impress some mark which cannot be confounded with the rest. To seal is to put a mark on a thing. When you put a mark on anything, you do so lest it might be confused with other things, and you should not be able to recognize it. The Father, then, has sealed Him. What is that, has sealed? Bestowed on Him something peculiar, which puts Him out of comparison with all other men. For that reason it is said of Him, God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. What is it then to seal, but to have Him excepted? This is the import of above Your fellows. And so, do not, says He, despise me because I am the Son of man, but seek from me, not the meat that perishes, but that which endures to eternal life. For I am the Son of man in such manner as not to be one of you: I am Son of man in such manner that God the Father sealed me. What does that mean, He sealed me? Gave me something peculiarly my own, that I should not be confounded with mankind, but that mankind should be delivered by me.

They said therefore unto Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? For He had said to them, Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto eternal life. What shall we do? they ask; by observing what, shall we be able to fulfill this precept? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. This is then to eat the meat, not that which perishes, but that which endures unto eternal life. To what purpose do you make ready teeth and stomach? Believe, and you have eaten already. Faith is indeed distinguished from works, even as the apostle says, that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law: Romans 3:28 there are works which appear good, without faith in Christ; but they are not good, because they are not referred to that end in which works are good; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. Romans 10:4 For that reason, He wills not to distinguish faith from work, but declared faith itself to be work. For it is that same faith that works by love. Galatians 5:6 Nor did He say, This is your work; but, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent; so that he who glories, may glory in the Lord. And because He invited them to faith, they, on the other hand, were still asking for signs by which they might believe. See if the Jews do not ask for signs. They said therefore unto Him, What sign will you do, that we may see and believe you? What do you work? Was it a trifle that they were fed with five loaves? They knew this indeed, but they preferred manna from heaven to this food. But the Lord Jesus declared Himself to be such an one, that He was superior to Moses. For Moses dared not say of himself that he gave, not the meat which perishes, but that which endures to eternal life. Jesus promised something greater than Moses gave. By Moses indeed was promised a kingdom, and a land flowing with milk and honey, temporal peace, abundance of children, health of body, and all other things, temporal goods indeed, yet in figure spiritual; because in the Old Testament they were promised to the old man. They considered therefore the things promised by Moses, and they considered the things promised by Christ. The former promised a full belly on the earth, but of the meat which perishes; the latter promised, not the meat which perishes, but that which endures unto eternal life. They gave attention to Him that promised the more, but just as if they did not yet see Him do greater things. They considered therefore what sort of works Moses had done, and they wished yet some greater works to be done by Him who promised them such great things. What, say they, will you do, that we may believe you? And that you may know that they compared those former miracles with this and so judged these miracles which Jesus did as being less; Our fathers, say they, did eat manna in the wilderness. But what is manna? Perhaps ye despise it. As it is written, He gave them manna to eat. By Moses our fathers received bread from heaven, and Moses did not say to them, Labor for the meat which perishes not. You promise meat which perishes not, but which endures to eternal life; and yet you work not such works as Moses did. He gave, not barley loaves, but manna from heaven.

Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, not Moses gave you bread from heaven, but my Father gave you bread from heaven. For the true bread is He that comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. The true bread then is He that gives life to the world; and the same is the meat of which I have spoken a little before —Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto eternal life. Therefore, both that manna signified this meat, and all those signs were signs of me. You have longed for signs of me; do ye despise Him that was signified? Not Moses then gave bread from heaven: God gives bread. But what bread? Manna, perhaps? No, but the bread which manna signified, namely, the Lord Jesus Himself. My Father gives you the true bread. For the bread of God is He that comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Like that Samaritan woman, to whom it was said, Whoever drinks of this water shall never thirst. She, immediately understanding it in reference to the body, and wishing to be rid of want, said, Give me, O Lord, of this water; in the same manner also these said, O Lord, give us this bread; which may refresh us, and yet not fail. And Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of Life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst. He that comes to me; this is the same thing as He that believes in me; and shall never hunger is to be understood to mean the same thing as shall never thirst. For by both is signified that eternal sufficiency in which there is no want. You desire bread from heaven; you have it before you, and yet you do not eat. But I said to you, that you also have seen me, and you believed not. But I have not on that account lost my people. For has your unbelief made the faith of God of none effect? Romans 3:3 For, see what follows: All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me, I will not cast out of doors. What kind of within is that, whence there is no going out of doors? Noble interior, sweet retreat! O secret dwelling without weariness, without the bitterness of evil thoughts, without the sollicitings of temptations and the interruptions of griefs! Is it not that secret dwelling whither shall enter that well-deserving servant, to whom the Lord will say, Enter into the joy of your Lord? Matthew 25:23 And him that will come to me, I will not cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. Is it for that reason that You will not cast out him that shall come unto You, because You have descended from heaven, not to do Your own will, but the will of Him that sent You? Great mystery! I beseech you, let us knock together; something may come forth to us which may feed us, according to that which has delighted us. That great and sweet secret dwelling-place: He that will come to me. Give heed, give heed, and weigh the matter: He that will come unto me, I will not cast out. Why? Because I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. Is it then the very reason why You cast not out him that comes unto You, that You came down from heaven, not to do Your own will, but the will of Him that sent You? The very reason. Why do we ask whether it be the same? The same it is; Himself says it. For it would not be right in us to suspect Him to mean other than He says, Whoever will come to me, I will not cast out. And, as if you asked, wherefore? He answered, Because I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. I am afraid that the reason why the soul went forth away from God is, that it was proud; nay, I do not doubt it. For it is written, Pride is the beginning of all sin; and the beginning of man's pride is a falling away from God. It is written, it is firm and sure, it is true. And hence what is said of proud mortal man, clad in the tattered rags of the flesh, weighed down with the weight of a corruptible body, and withal extolling himself, and forgetting with what skin-coat he is clothed — what, I ask, says the Scripture to him? Why is dust and

ashes proud? Why proud! Let the Scripture tell why. Because in his life he put forth his inmost parts. Sirach 10:14-15 What is put forth, but threw afar off? This is to go forth away. For to enter within, is to long after the inmost parts; to put forth the inmost parts, is to go forth away. The proud man puts forth the inmost parts, the humble man earnestly desires the inmost parts. If we are cast out by pride, let us return by humility.

Pride is the source of all diseases, because pride is the source of all sins. When a physician removes a disorder from the body, if he merely cures the malady produced by some particular cause, but not the cause itself, he seems to heal the patient for a time, but while the cause remains, the disease will repeat itself. For example, to speak of this more expressly, some humor in the body produces a scurf or sores; there follows a high fever, and not a little pain; certain remedies are applied to repress the scurf, and to allay that heat of the sore; the remedies are applied, and they do good; you see the man who was full of sores and scurf healed; but because that humor was not expelled, it returns again to ulcers. The physician, perceiving this, purges away the humor, removes the cause, and there will be no more sores. Whence does iniquity abound? From pride. Cure pride and there will be no more iniquity. Consequently, that the cause of all diseases might be cured, namely, pride, the Son of God came down and was made low. Why are you proud, O man? God, for you, became low. You would perhaps be ashamed to imitate a lowly man; at any rate, imitate the lowly God. The Son of God came in the character of a man and was made low. You are taught to become humble, not of a man to become a brute. He, being God, became man; do thou, O man, recognize that you are man. Your whole humility is to know yourself. Therefore because God teaches humility, He said, I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. For this is the commendation of humility. Whereas pride does its own will, humility does the will of God. Therefore, Whoever comes to me, I will not cast him out. Why? Because I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. I came humble, I came to teach humility, I came a master of humility: he that comes to me is made one body with me; he that comes to me becomes humble; he who adheres to me will be humble, because he does not his own will, but the will of God; and therefore he shall not be cast out, for when he was proud he was cast out.

See those inner things commended to us in the psalm: But the sons of men will put their trust in the covering of Your wings. See what it is to enter within; see what it is to flee for refuge to His protection; see what it is to run even under the Father's lash, for He scourges every son whom He receives. But the sons of men shall put their trust under the cover of Your wings. What is within? They shall be filled with the plenteousness of Your house, when You shall have sent them within, entering into the joy of their Lord; they shall be filled with the plenteousness of Your house; and You shall give them to drink of the stream of Your pleasure. For with You is the fountain of life. Not away without You, but within with You, is the fountain of life. And in Your light we shall see light. Show Your mercy upon them that know You, and Your righteousness to them that are of upright heart. They who follow the will of their Lord, not seeking their own, but the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are the upright in heart, their feet shall not be moved. For God is good to Israel, to the upright in heart. But, as for me, says he, my feet were almost moved. Why? Because I was jealous at sinners, looking at the peace of sinners. To whom is God good then, unless to the upright in heart? For God was displeasing to me when my heart was crooked. Why displeasing? Because He gave happiness to the wicked, and therefore my feet tottered, as

if I had served God in vain. For this reason, then, my feet were almost moved, because I was not upright of heart. What then is upright in heart? Following the will of God. One man is prosperous, another man toils; the one lives wickedly and yet is prosperous, the other lives rightly and is distressed. Let not him that lives rightly and is in distress be angry; he has within what the prosperous man has not: let him therefore not be saddened, nor vex himself, nor faint. That prosperous man has gold in his own chest; this other has God in his conscience. Compare now gold and God, chest and conscience. The former has that which perishes, and has it where it will perish; the latter has God, who cannot perish, and has Him there whence He cannot be taken away: only if he is upright in heart; for then He enters within and goes not out. For that reason, what said he? For with You is the fountain of life: not with us. We must therefore enter within, that we may live; we must not be, as it were, content to perish, nor willing to be satisfied of our own, to be dried up, but we must put our mouth to the very fountain, where the water fails not. Because Adam wished to live by his own counsel, he, too, fell through him who had fallen before through pride, who invited him to drink of the cup of his own pride. Wherefore, because with You is the fountain of life, and in Your light we shall see light, let us drink within, let us see within. Why was there a going out thence? Hear why: Let not the foot of pride come to me. Therefore he, to whom the foot of pride came, went out. Show that therefore he went out. And let not the hands of sinners move me; because of the foot of pride. Why do you say this? They are fallen, all they that work iniquity. Where are they fallen? In their very pride. They were driven out, and they could not stand. If, then, pride drove them out who were not able to stand, humility sends them in who can stand forever. For this reason, moreover, he who said, The bones that were brought low shall rejoice, said before, You shall give joy and gladness to my hearing. What does he mean by, to my hearing? By hearing You I am happy; because of Your voice I am happy; by drinking within I am happy. Therefore do I not fall; therefore the bones that were brought low will rejoice; therefore the friend of the Bridegroom stands and hears Him; therefore he stands, because he hears. He drinks of the fountain within, therefore he stands. They who willed not to drink of the fountain within, there are they fallen: they were driven, they were not able to stand.

Thus, the teacher of humility came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Let us come to Him, enter in unto Him, be ingrafted into Him, that we may not be doing our own will, but the will of God: and He will not cast us out, because we are His members, because He willed to be our head by teaching us humility. Finally, hear Himself discoursing: Come unto me, you who labor and are heavy laden: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and when you have learned this, you shall find rest for your souls, Matthew 11:28-29 from which you cannot be cast out; because I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me; I teach humility; none but the humble can come unto me. Only pride casts out; how can he go out who keeps humility and falls not away from the truth? So much as could be said about the hidden sense has now been said, brethren: this sense is hidden enough, and I know not whether I have drawn out and shaped in suitable words for you, why it is that He casts not out him that comes unto Him; because He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

And this, says He, is the will of the Father that sent, that of all that He has given me I should lose nothing. He that keeps humility was given to Him; the same He receives: he that keeps not humility is far from the Master of humility. That of all which He has given me, I should lose nothing. So it is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish. Of the proud, there may perish; but of the little ones, none perishes; because, if you will not become as this little one, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Of all that the Father has given me, I should lose nothing, but I will raise it up again on the last day. See how here He delineates that twofold resurrection. He that comes unto me immediately rises again, being made humble in my members; but I will raise him up again on the last day also according to the flesh. For this is the will of my Father that sent me, that every one who sees the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. He said above, Whoever hears my word, and believes Him that sent me: but now, Whoever sees the Son, and believes in Him. He has not said, sees the Son, and believes in the Father; for to believe in the Son is the same thing as to believe in the Father. Because, even as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given also to the Son to have life in Himself. That every one who sees the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life: by believing and by passing unto life, just as by that first resurrection. And, because that is not the only resurrection, He says, And I will raise him up at the last day.

Source: Translated by John Gibb. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 7 ed. Philip Schaff. Christian Literature Publishing Co., 18888. Revised for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

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Tractate 30 (John 7:19-24)

Augustine of Hippo

Patristic · Nicene & Post-Nicene · Exegesis

STROMATA 29

INTRODUCTION

Delivered as part of Augustine's long preaching cycle through John's Gospel at Hippo, this homily takes up Christ's confrontation with the Jerusalem crowd after the healing at Bethesda, the charge of Sabbath-breaking met by the counter-charge that his accusers themselves do not keep the Law they invoke. Augustine's interest is less juridical than diagnostic: he reads the crowd's agitation as the recoil of weak eyes from sudden light, and uses the scene to press his hearers on the difference between seeing Jesus and recognising him. The Tractates would shape Latin scriptural preaching for a thousand years, and the pastoral directness on display here, the preacher pausing to address "beloved," the unhurried unfolding of a single verse, is part of why. Read it slowly, as a sermon meant to be overheard rather than studied.

The passage of the holy Gospel of which we have before discoursed to you, beloved, is followed by that of today, which has just now been read. Both the disciples and the Jews heard the Lord speaking; both men of truth and liars heard the Truth speaking; both friends and enemies heard Charity speaking; both good men and bad men heard the Good speaking. They heard, but He discerned; He saw and foresaw whom His discourse profited and would profit. Among those who were then, He saw; among us who were to be, He foresaw. Let us therefore hear the Gospel, just as if we were listening to the Lord Himself present: nor let us say, O happy they who were able to see Him! Because there were many of them who saw, and also killed Him; and there are many among us who have not seen Him, and yet have believed. For the precious truth that sounded forth from the mouth of the Lord was both written for our sakes, and preserved for our sakes, and recited for our sakes, and will be recited also for the sake of our prosperity, even until the end of the world. The Lord is above; but the Lord, the Truth, is also here. For the body of the Lord, in which He rose again from the dead, can be only in one place; but His truth is everywhere diffused. Let us then hear the Lord, and let us also speak that which He shall have granted to us concerning His own words.

Did not Moses, says He, give you the law, and yet none of you does the law? Why do ye seek to kill me? For you seek to kill me just for this reason, that none of you does the law; for if you did do the law, you would recognize Christ in its very letters, and you would not kill Him when present with you. And they answered: The crowd answered Him; answered as a tumultuous crowd, things not pertaining to order, but to confusion; in a word, the crowd was disturbed. See what answer it made: You have a devil: who seeks to kill you? As if it were not worse to say, You have a devil, than to kill Him. To Him, indeed, was it said, that He had a devil, who was casting out devils. What else can a turbulent disorderly crowd

say? What else can filth stirred up do but stink? The crowd was disturbed; by what? By the truth. For the eyes that have not soundness cannot endure the brightness of the light.

But the Lord, manifestly not disturbed, but calm in His truth, rendered not evil for evil nor railing for railing; 1 Peter 3:9 although, if He were to say to these men, You have a devil, He would certainly be saying what was true. For they would not have said such things to the Truth, unless the falsehood of the devil had instigated them. What then did He answer? Let us calmly hear, and drink in the serene word: I have done one work, and you all marvel. As if He said, What if you were to see all my works? For they were His works which they saw in the world, and yet they saw not Him who made them all: He did one thing, and they were disturbed because he made a man whole on the Sabbath day. As if, indeed, when any sick man recovered his health on the Sabbath day, it had been any other that made such a man whole than He who offended them, because He made one man whole on the Sabbath day. For who else has made others whole than He who is health itself — He who gives even to the beasts that health which He gave to this man? For it was bodily health. The health of the flesh is repaired, and the flesh dies; and when it is repaired, death is only put off, not taken away. However, even that same health, brethren, is from the Lord, through whomsoever it may be given: by whose care and ministry soever it may be imparted, it is given by Him from whom all health is, to whom it is said in the psalm, O Lord, You will save men and beasts; as You have multiplied Your mercy, O God. For because You are God Your multiplied mercy reaches even to the safety of human flesh, reaches even to the safety of dumb animals; but Thou who givest health of flesh common to men and beasts, is there no health which Thou reservest for men? There is certainly another which is not only not common to men and beasts, but to men themselves is not common to good and bad. In a word, when he had there spoken of this health which men and cattle receive in common, because of that health which men, but only the good, ought to hope for, he added as he went on: But the sons of men shall put their trust under the cover of Your wings. They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of Your house; and You shall give them drink from the torrent of Your pleasure. For with You is the fountain of life; and in Your light shall they see light. This is the health which belongs to good men, those whom he called sons of men; while he had said above, O Lord, You shall save men and beasts. How then? Were not those men sons of men, that after he had said men, he should go on and say, But the sons of men: as if men and sons of men meant different things? Yet I do not believe that the Holy Spirit had said this without some indication of distinction. The term men refers to the first Adam, sons of men to Christ. Perhaps, indeed, men relate to the first man; but sons of men relate to the Son of man.

I have done one work, and you all marvel. And immediately He subjoined: Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision. It was well done that you received circumcision from Moses. Not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers; since it was Abraham that first received circumcision from the Lord. Genesis 17:10 And ye circumcise on the Sabbath day. Moses has convicted you: you have received in the law to circumcise on the eighth day; you have received in the law to cease from labor on the seventh day; Exodus 20:10 if the eighth day from the child's birth fall on the seventh day of the week, what will you do? Will ye abstain from work to keep the Sabbath, or will you circumcise to fulfill the sacrament of the eighth day? But I know, says He, what ye do. You circumcise a man. Why? Because circumcision relates to what is a kind of seal of salvation, and men ought not to abstain from the work of salvation on

the Sabbath day. Therefore be ye not angry with me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day. If, says He, a man on the Sabbath day receives circumcision that the law should not be broken (for it was something saving that was ordained by Moses in that ordinance of circumcision), why are you angry at me for working a healing on the Sabbath day?

Perhaps, indeed, that circumcision pointed to the Lord Himself, at whom they were indignant, because He worked cures and healing. For circumcision was commanded to be applied on the eighth day: and what is circumcision but the spoiling of the flesh? This circumcision, then, signified the removal of carnal lusts from the heart. Therefore not without cause was it given, and ordered to be made in that member; since by that member the creature of mortal kind is procreated. By one man came death, just as by one man the resurrection of the dead; 1 Corinthians 15:21 and by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Romans 5:12 Therefore every man is born with a foreskin, because every man is born with the vice of propagation; and God cleanses not, either from the vice with which we are born, or from the vices which we add thereto by ill living, except by the stony knife, the Lord Christ. For Christ was the Rock. Now they used to circumcise with stone knives, and by the name of rock they prefigured Christ; and yet when He was present with them they did not acknowledge Him, but besides, they sought to kill Him. But why on the eighth day, unless because after the seventh day of the week the Lord rose again on the Lord's day? Therefore Christ's resurrection, which happened on the third day indeed of His passion, but on the eighth day in the days of the week, that same resurrection it is that does circumcise us. Hear of those that were circumcised with the real stone, while the apostle admonishes them: If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting on the right hand of God; set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:1-2 He speaks to the circumcised: Christ has risen; He has taken away from you carnal desires, evil lusts, the superfluity with which you were born, and that far worse which you had added thereto by ill living; being circumcised by the Rock, why do you still set your affections on the earth? And finally, for that Moses gave you the law, and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath day, understand that by this is signified the good work which I have done, in that I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day; because he was cured that he might be whole in body, and also he believed that he might be whole in soul.

Judge not according to personal appearance, but judge righteous judgment. What is this? Just now, you who by the law of Moses circumcise on the Sabbath day are not angry with Moses; and because I made a man whole on the Sabbath day you are angry with me. You judge by the person; give heed to the truth. I do not prefer myself to Moses, says the Lord, who was also the Lord of Moses. So consider us as you would two men, as both men; judge between us, but judge a true judgment; do not condemn him by honoring me, but honor me by understanding him. For this He said to them in another place: If you believed Moses ye would certainly believe me also, for he wrote of me. John 5:46 But in this place He willed not to say this, Himself and Moses being as it were placed before these men for judgment. Because of Moses' law you circumcise, even when it happens to be the Sabbath day, and will you not that I should show the beneficence of healing during the Sabbath? For the Lord of circumcision and the Lord of the Sabbath is the same who is the Author of health; and they are servile works that you are forbidden to do on the Sabbath; if you really understand what servile works are, you sin not. For

he that commits sin is the servant of sin. Is it a servile work to heal a man on the Sabbath day? You do eat and drink (to infer somewhat from the admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ, and from His words); at any rate, why do you eat and drink on the Sabbath, but because that what ye do pertains to health? By this ye show that the works of health are not in any wise to be omitted on the Sabbath. Therefore do not judge by person, but judge righteous judgment. Consider me as you would a man; consider Moses as a man: if you will judge according to the truth, you will condemn neither Moses nor me; and when you know the truth you will know me, because I am the Truth.

It requires great labor in this world, brethren to get clear of the vice which the Lord has noted in this place, so as not to judge by appearance, but to keep right judgment. The Lord, indeed, admonished the Jews, but He warned us also; them He convicted, us He instructed; them He reproved, us He encouraged. Let us not imagine that this was not said to us, simply because we were not there at that time. It was written, it is read; when it was recited we heard it; but we heard it as said to the Jews; let us not place ourselves behind ourselves and watch Him reproofing enemies, while we ourselves do that which the truth may reprove in us. The Jews indeed judged by appearance, but for that reason they belong not to the New Testament, they have not the kingdom of heaven in Christ, nor are joined to the society of the holy angels; they sought earthly things of the Lord; for a land of promise, victory over enemies, fruitfulness of child-bearing, increase of children, abundance of fruit — all which things were indeed promised to them by God, the True and the Good, promised to them, however, as unto carnal men, — all these things made for them the Old Testament. What is the Old Testament? The inheritance, as it were, belonging to the old man. We have been renewed, have been made a new man, because He who is the new man has come. What is so new as to be born of a virgin? Therefore, because there was not in Him what instruction might renew, because He had no sin, there was given Him a new origin of birth. In Him a new birth, in us a new man. What is a new man? A man renewed from oldness. Renewed unto what? Unto desiring heavenly things, unto longing for things eternal, unto earnestly seeking the country which is above and fears no foe, where we do not lose a friend nor fear an enemy; where we live with good affection, without any want; where no longer any advances, because none fails; where no man is born, because no man dies; where there is no hungering nor thirsting; where immortality is fullness, and truth our aliment. Having these promises, and pertaining to the New Testament, and being made heirs of a new inheritance, and co-heirs of the Lord Himself, we have a far different hope from theirs: let us not judge by appearance, but hold right judgment. Who is he that judges not according to the person? He that loves equally. Equal love causes that persons be not accepted. It is not when we honor men in diverse measure according to their degrees that we ought to fear lest we are accepting persons. For where we judge between two, and at times between relations, sometimes it happens that judgment has to be made between father and son; the father complains of a bad son, or the son complains of a harsh father; we regard the honor which is due to the father from the son; we do not make the son equal to the father in honor, but we give him preference if he has a good cause: let us regard the son on an equality with the father in the truth, and thus shall we bestow the honor due, so that equity destroy not merit. Thus we profit by the words of the Lord, and that we may profit, we are assisted by His grace.

Source: Translated by John Gibb. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 7 ed. Philip Schaff. Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888. Revised for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

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