

## A SERMON OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

with first an approximated modern rendering and  
some explanatory notes and then followed  
by original text as edited by Thomas Arnold

by

*Jeremiah Embs.*

*The fourth Wednesday in Advent.*

Exit<sup>1</sup> sermon in universal (all of)<sup>2</sup> Judea.—Book of  
Luke Chapter 7 : Verse 17.

[Sermon Number 133]

As John came before Christ in life, so he came before him in preaching, and everywhere (in all ways)<sup>3</sup> John made ready men for to trust<sup>4</sup> in Christ. For the sun before he come sendeth his light, and after he shineth ; and in works of craft the rude man (as in a rough workman) cometh before, and subtil man cometh after and maketh fair. Luke telleth that, *word went out of Jesus into all Jude (Judea), and in to all the country about, for wonders that Christ did. And John's disciples told him of all these, that were said of Christ. And John called then together two of his disciples, and sent them<sup>5</sup> to Jesus and said, Art thou the prophet that is to come, or we abiden (are we abiding or do we wait for) another better ? Baptist [that is John the Baptist] said not these words for he had dread<sup>7</sup> in this belief, but for [that] he would that his disciples and other men were taught of Christ ; and so he covetide<sup>8</sup>*

1 *Exit* is third person singular perfect active indicative of *exeo*.

2 *Universam* is accusative feminine singular of *universus*.

3 *Algatis* is Scottish for "all gates", a gate or gait being a pathway or entrance so that "all gate" or *algatis* means "everywhere." Variations include *gait*, *a'gate(s)*, *augait*, and possibly "gat" and "gor", etc.

4 *Trowe* is to "trust in" while *trowe* and *troth* can also mean to vow or pledge. *Trowing* was part of contract, marriage, and credit law. To give *trow* was to give credence or credit to; to be surety or the underwriter or cosigner of a debt for. The root relates to "truth."

<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/trow>

5 *Clepid* is to call or name.

6 The word "hem" in Middle English is equivalent to "them" as though the word is abbreviated in a manner that drops the letter "t" like 'hem.

7 A serious devotion to the point of fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.

8 Probably the same as what is spelled today as "coveted" probably used here to mean strictly *desired* or sought out or displayed demonstrably in order to teach by example. John displaying worship of Christ in order to teach and encourage others to follow in like manner. Used again in like manner in this passage from Wycliffe Sermon XC VII: "Bi þis gospel mai we lerne, how Crist covetide honest poverté, for he was not bore in þe kingis citee, but in pore uplandish toun,—not in þe beste place of þe toun, but in a

Christ's worship, and ordained therefore many ways<sup>9</sup>. And when these two disciples came, they said thus to Christ ; John Baptist sent us to thee, and said, Art thou he that is to come or we abiden another ? And Christ in that same hour healed many men their sickness, as some of their languishing, and some of the wounds, and sum of their fendis<sup>10</sup> (fiends), and to many blind Christ gave sight. And Christ answered and said to him, Going forth, tell again to John things that ye have (or have had) heard ; for blind men [have] seen (or see), and halte<sup>11</sup> (or spelled halt) men go ; meselis<sup>12</sup> (leprous) been made clean, deaf men hear ; dead men risen (are risen or rise), poor men been preached good<sup>13</sup>. And he is blessed that shall not be sclaudrid<sup>14</sup> (offended) in me.

These words been expounded in the first part of the sermons. And when John's messengers were passed, began Jesus to say of John to the people, What went ye to see in [the] desert ? Were ye went to see a reed wawid (waving, wagging, or shaken) with the wind ? But what thing did ye [go] out to see ? Were a man cled (clad or clothed) with soft clothes ? Lo, these men that been (or have been or are) in a precious cloth, and in delicis (delicates), been in king's houses. But went ye to see ? were a prophet ? Ye, I say to you,

pore comune stable." Or, "By this gospel may we learn, how Christ coveted honest poverty, for he was not born in the king's city, but in poor uplandish (upscale part of) town, not in the best place of the town, but in a poor common stable."

9 Possibly meaning made use of many ways of teaching worship of Christ or else ordered journeys for the sake of learning.

10 First person singular past historic of *fendre* French verb to split, chop, break, crack, split; possibly meaning fissure as in fission or fistula; related to Greek *φείδουαι*. Words like *fade*. The King James text includes, "and of evil spirits." The word *fendis* is found in old manuscripts in connection with evil spirits. This is devil possession linguistically symbolized as a spiritual fissure. The words *feint* and *faint* may be related as a strike in fencing with the only purpose being deception and fainting is a symptom demonic possession and caused by terror and fasting can cause it and fasting can drive out devils in others when combined with prayer. Joshua 2:9, Psalms 107:5, Ezekiel 21:7, Daniel 8:27, Matthew 15:32 (seven loaves like seven spirits in the desert and bread called meat), Mark 8:1, Matthew 17:21. In Wycliffe's translation Luke 7:21-23 "And in that our he heelide many men of her sijknessis, and woundis, and yuel spiritis; and he zaf sizt to many blynde men. And Jhesus answerde, and seide to hem, Go ze agen, and telle ze to Joon tho thingis that ze han herd and seyn; blynde men seyn, crokid men goen, mesels ben maad cleene, deaf men heren, deed men risen agen, pore men ben takun to prechyng of the gospel. And he that schal not be sclaudrid in me, is blessid.

11 Halted people as in those who are crippled or disabled or lame.

12 *Meselis* means "leprous" from which we get the name of the disease "measles" meaning "spots like a leopard."

13 "have had the gospel preached unto them" in the King James.

14 As the root in scandalized. Meaning to have taken offense in or by way of.

more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Lo, I send mine angel before thy face, the which angel shall make ready thy way before thee. Certis (for certain or verily which is to say truly) I say to you, there is no man more [a] prophet among the children of women than is John, but he that is less (or least) in the rewmes<sup>15</sup> (rooms) of heavens is more than he ; as Christ said before. But here it seemeth that speech of Christ out-taketh himself by his words ; and these words been sotheli<sup>16</sup> said against all capcious<sup>17</sup> men.

ORIGINAL TEXT  
AS EDITED FROM  
ORIGINAL MSS.

By  
Thomas Arnold, M.A.  
of University College, Oxford  
with his own original footnotes marked  
as such.

DE FOUPE WEDNESDAI IN ADVENT.  
The fourth Wednesday in Advent.

[SERMON CXXX.]

*Exiit sermon in universam Judeam.*—Luc. Vii. [17.]

As Joon cam bifore Crist in liif, so he cam bifor him in preching, and algatis Joon made redi men for to trowe in Crist. For þe sunne bifore he come sendiþ his lizt, and after he shyneþ ; and in werkes of crafte þe rude man comeþ bifore, and subtil man comeþ aftir and mak iþ fair. Luk telliþ þat, *word wente out of Jesus into al Jude, and in to al þe contre aboute, for woundris þat Crist dide. And Joons disciplis tolden him of alle þes, þat weren siede of Crist. And Joon clepide þanne togidere two of hise disciplis, and sente hem to Jesus, and seide, Art þou þe prophete þat is to come, or we abiden anoper betere? Baptist seide not þes wordis for he hadde drede in þis bileve, but for he wolde þat his disciplis and oþer men weren tauzte of Crist ; and so he coveitide Cristis worship, and ordeynede þerfore many gatis. And whanne þes two disciplis camen, þei seiden þus to Crist ; Joon Baptist sente us to þee, and seide, Art þou he þat is to come or we abiden anopir ? And Crist in þat same our heelide many men of þer siiknesse, as summe of þer languishing, and sum of woundis, and sum of fendis, and to many blynde Crist zaf sizt. And Crist answeride and seide to hem, Going*

*forþ, telle azen to Joon þingis þat ze han herd ; for blynde men seen, and halte men goen ; meselis ben maad clene, defe men heeren ; dede men risen, pore men ben prechid good. And he is blessid þat shall not be scalundrid in me.*

Þese wordis ben expowned in þe firste part of þe sermons<sup>18</sup>. *And whanne Joones messengeris weren passid, began Jesus to seie of Joon to þe peple, What wente ze to see in desert ? Wher ze wente to se a reed wawid wiþ þe wynd ? But what þing zeden ze out to see ? Wher a man cled wiþ softe cloþis ? Lo, þes men þat ben in a prescious cloiþ, and in delicis, ben in kyngis housis. But what wente ze to se ? wher a profete ? 3he, Y seie to zou, more þan a profete. For þis is he of whom it is writun, Lo, Y sende myn aungel bifore þi face, þe which aungel shal make redi þi weie bifore þee. Certis Y seie to zou, þer is no man more profete among þe children of wymmen þan is Joon, but he þat is lesse in þe rewmes of hevenes is more þan he ; as Crist seide bifore. But here it semeþ þat speche of Crist out-takiþ himsilf bi his wordis ; and þes wordis ben soþeli seid azens alle capcious men.*

<sup>15</sup> Or in the “kingdom of heaven” as in the King James text.

<sup>16</sup> As in forsooth – a truly spoken word, phrase, proverb, curse, prophecy, or prognostication, or declaration against one person or group which can also sooth another.

<sup>17</sup> Probably same as “capacious” in modern spelling.

<sup>18</sup> T.A. original note : See vol. I. Sermon XXVIII. Since he preached on the corresponding passage in St. Matthew, Wyclif appears to have discovered the true meaning of the words πτωχοί εὐαγγελίζονται, which are mistranslated in both Wycliffite versions.