

The One Jesus Loved

On this resurrection Sunday instead of focusing on Jesus and the empty tomb, I want to look at the relationship that Jesus had with John, who is called the beloved of Jesus.

We know that one disciple betrayed Him. We also know that ten others followed Him and lived with Him every day for three years. While they all heard the same words and saw the same miracles, only one had the kind of relationship with Him to be acknowledged as the beloved disciple.

I pray that as we celebrate His resurrection and what it means to worship the living Christ, that we move past the intellectual and into the relational so that we fall in love with Jesus; that we too may be called His beloved.

1. The Disciple of Love

John 19:24-27

So the soldiers did these things, 25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Years ago I remember a friend telling us the story of a man who discipled and influenced countless lives for Christ. He developed cancer and his friends gathered around him to pray and God worked a miracle, and his cancer went into remission. Years later the cancer came back and again his friends prayed and again the cancer went into remission. A few years after that the cancer came back and despite all the prayers of his friends the cancer did not go away. A long process began as he fought the cancer with chemo and radiation. At first, he was surrounded by many friends and people that he has discipled. But as time went by, fewer and fewer people were around him. By the time the end came almost two years later the only ones who were by him were his wife, children and one disciple who had dedicated his life to serving him, because of the impact that his ministry had on his life. While many people said they loved him, apart from his family, only one was there until the end.

Peter was the brash leader who had said he would be there all the way to the end, but when the time came he denied Jesus three times and then hid in shame.

The other disciples who had shared in His ministry and experienced the glory of Palm Sunday, now dispersed and where nowhere to be found.

- Only John, the beloved, was there with the three Mary's at the foot of the cross. Only John risked his own life by being associated with Jesus.
- Only John accompanied Jesus's mother to witness the ultimate sacrifice.
- Only John looked on as his rabbi, his teacher, his friend was nailed to a cross like a common criminal.

2. The Despair of Love

John 20:2-9

2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. 4 Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

When the women gave the report of the empty grave, it wasn't the impetuous Peter that got to the grave first, it was John. Not knowing what to make of things, he stopped short of going in and instead just looked in to see the cloths that Jesus had been buried in neatly folded and set aside. What did this mean?

It was only after Peter caught up to him and went inside, that John entered the grave. His mind could not comprehend what He was seeing. The Body of Christ was gone and all that remained were the burial cloths.

- Where was Jesus, the One he loved?
What had they done with his body?
- Why did they leave his burials linens behind?
- Where were the soldiers guarding the tomb?
- Who pushed away the stone?

3. The Apostle of Love

John 21:20-24

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" 23 So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

If you follow church history, you probably know that every disciple, except for one, was martyred. They were all killed for their faith.

The only one who died of natural causes was John.

Not to say that John didn't suffer for his faith because he did. He was exiled to the isle of Patmos.

Rev 1:9-10

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John's Gospel differs from the other Synoptic Gospels in that he focuses on God's love (John 3:16) as expressed in Christ, he focuses on Jesus as being the creative force behind creation, and he highlights Christ's relationship to His Church as being between a groom and his bride.

He then goes on to refer to the Church as the bride of Jesus, 5 more times in the book of Revelation.

Because of his unique love relationship with Jesus, he became His mouthpiece. The Book of Revelation is credited to John, but John himself credits it to Jesus and himself as a mere scribe.

Rev 1:1-3

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Conclusion

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior:

- Let us remember that Jesus calls us His Bride.
- Let us fall passionately in love with Jesus, just as John did.
- Let us present ourselves to Him pure and blameless.
- Let us strive to live holy lives.
- Let us share His love with the lost and the lonely.

Let us be more than a witness to His resurrection, let us be a witness to His love.