

"The Other Disciple"

(Lk 24:1-12); John 20:1-10; Acts 10:42-43

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As we read together our reading from John's Gospel about a 'footrace' to the tomb of Jesus, you may have noticed a phrase that was repeated some 4 times in just the short span of 7 verses: **"The other disciple."** Anyone know just who this mystery 'other disciple' is? Particularly because of the phrase that comes right after the first time Peter's 'running mate' is described as 'the other disciple'... **"the one whom Jesus loved"** ... his companion is believed to be John. This singular description of one of the 12 disciples of Christ does not appear in ANY of the Gospels except for today's source: the Gospel of ... JOHN.

Besides this story on Easter morn, you are likely familiar with many of the other references to this 'beloved' disciple of Jesus. They include: at the Last Supper, when Jesus says that one of the disciples will betray him, this one (at Peter's request) asks the Lord just who it is; as Jesus hung on the cross ("Mercy Tree"), He declares his mother Mary and the 'beloved disciple' to be mother and son, entrusting her care to him; And when Jesus appears to the disciples after His resurrection, answering his own question of **"Children, you have no fish, have you?"** by providing a bounty of **"153 fish,"** it is this same 'loved one' who helps Peter bring in the miraculous catch. It is in that same chapter, the last one in John's Gospel, that we read that the whole book itself is based on the writings of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'

If this 'other disciple' IS John, why the mystery? Perhaps, because John didn't want to focus too much attention on himself? (Although, calling himself the 'one whom Jesus loved' doesn't sound all that humble...) And while John is mentioned prominently along with his brother James, as well as 'Captain Jesus' first lieutenant, Simon Peter, it is most certainly 'The Rock' who gets top billing in the 'not-so-Dirty Dozen.' Well, at least washed 'clean' by the blood of Christ...

So who IS this guy John, this 'other disciple,' anyway? Well, we know that he and his brother James were fishermen, along with fellow disciples Peter and Andrew. The siblings worked with their father Zebedee in the family business, and their mother was named Salome. (NOT to be confused with another 'Salome' of that time, who instigated the beheading of another 'John'... John the Baptist). James and John's Mom, following her sons' lead, actually became a

follower of Jesus herself. She would also, at one point, show just how much she loved her boys... even to a fault. She would have the 'chutzpah' to ask the Son of God Himself if her two boys could sit at the right and left hand of God. NOT the most diplomatic, or wise, thing to ask the One who RIGHTFULLY should sit in those places of honor...

Interestingly, it is also been suggested that Salome (the righteous one) was the sister of Jesus' mother Mary. Which would make Jesus and John (and James) *cousins!* Perhaps it was that 'family connection' that contributed to Salome's bold request...

Aside from this family history, John holds the distinction of outliving all the other disciples, and being the only one to die of natural causes. His longevity afforded him the opportunity to work side-by-side with the prototype 'church planter,' Peter, and then later to go to the Isle of Patmos, off the coast of Greece, to write his epoch eschatological work, the Book of Revelation. A book that is, at once, filled with both *confusion* and *consolation*. In some ways, like the puzzling, yet powerful, empty tomb. This 'earth-shattering' writing does, perhaps in one way, bear witness to why John, and his brother, were also referred to as the **"Sons of Thunder."**

Aside from his authorship of one of the four synoptic Gospels, and that thought-provoking book of Revelation... as well as 3 epistles... John was involved in a number of 'remarkable' experiences with Jesus. Along with Peter and James, he was the only other witness to the raising of Jairus' daughter from death; the supernatural Transfiguration of Jesus; and the Lord's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. (This latter one which he and his friends contributed to one of Jesus' most famous sayings that lives on with us today: **"The spirit is willing, but the flesh (body) is weak."** (Matt. 26:41))

Aside from this all-too-human failure of a physical nature, John would also at times show his emotional flaws as well. Once, when the disciples were NOT welcomed with open arms in a Samaritan town, John took offense at this rejection, and asked their Teacher, **"Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"** (Luke 9:54) Fortunately, the cooler, and more compassionate, head of Jesus prevailed...

[John, despite his 'weakness' ('He who is without fault shall cast the first...)]

John, despite his 'weakness' ('He who is without fault shall cast the first stone') had many more occasions of faithful witness. He was the only disciple to stand at the foot of the cross in Jesus' final hours. It was there that he alone was given that great responsibility of looking after Mary, Jesus' mom. He and Peter were earlier given the task of locating and preparing that 'Upper Room' for Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples... that most important precursor to today's celebration of the Sacrament... which we observed just a few days ago.

And finally, long after his death John would be acclaimed the Patron Saint of **love, loyalty, friendship**, and of **authors**. Not bad for 'the baby' of the family... not only of natural birth, but spiritual... for John was the youngest of the Twelve.

Soooo, for ALL of these reasons to 'call John by name' in the Gospel that bears his name... none-the-least of which is his 'sprint-to-the-tape' at the empty tomb... WHY the cryptic "***the other disciple***" title? Perhaps it was because the author didn't want his future readers to always associate those actions with him alone. But rather, when we read about what that 'other disciple' did, we should instead insert our OWN name. That, in truth, WE are to be that 'other disciple.'

As great a leader as Peter would become for the cause of Christ, and His Church, WE are the ones that should outdistance him. We are the ones that should be more filled with adrenaline in coming to an 'empty tomb' in hopes of encountering the Living Lord Jesus. An 'empty tomb' called 'church?' Like those angels said, "***He is not here. He is risen.***"

Can not WE be that 'other disciple,' who comes running to a place looking for Jesus, but be afraid to come in? Perhaps a physical place, like this. But more importantly, can we come to places in our lives where Jesus bids us to come and find him... in the 'tomb' of our HEARTS... but we FEAR to enter into His holy presence?

Sometimes we need that fellow disciple... that brash, impetuous, faithful yet flawed fellow believer... to 'boldly go where no disciple has gone before.' We need that person who is willing to lead us, to guide us, to inspire us. We need those 'co-conspirators' to lead by example, and step out... or, 'step IN'... by faith. In walking... or running... side-by-side with a close friend and companion, we too must 'see... and believe.' Even when do not fully '**understand the Scripture.**' Through God's Word, even when we find an empty tomb... those places that have housed God's Holy Presence... we can yet be given the strength, the hope, the faith, to return to

our homes to ponder the mysteries we have experienced. And to find that the most important place of Jesus' presence is in the 'tomb' of our HEARTS!

May we learn by the examples of John. One who went from being a 'fisher of fish' to a 'fisher of men.' Working together to grow the church... trusting in the One who truly provides a 'bounty' of 'fish' ... even when our nets are torn and empty.

Like John, may we be known as one who STAYS by our Lord, and His sisters and brothers, when others do not... willing to care for his 'loved ones.' Not wanting to focus attention on ourselves, but yet being one known as a 'son or daughter of thunder.' Powerful in word and deed.

Despite our weakness, our flawed human nature, may we too be known for our LOVE, LOYALTY, FRIENDSHIP. No matter our age, young or old. Together, with fellow flawed followers of Jesus, let us seek after our Lord, wherever He may be found. No matter where our journeys lead, as we look into the eyes of one another, **broken** and **bruised** as they may be, may we SEE and BELIEVE in the Risen Christ... in living out OUR identity as "the other disciple"...

Questions for Reflection/CHARGE: *What difference does it make to believe that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead?* **How does it change the way you live?**

Just two days ago, we observed Good Friday. 'Good?' HOW? Why is the **cross** the symbol of our faith? Not for what happened that day... but two days later. Out of **broken body**, Came a **resurrected Savior**. From a **bloody cross**, came an **empty tomb**. Out of **DEATH**... came **LIFE!**

[Hold up Cross made of broken glass] This cross is made of the shattered glass from the once proud landmark in the city of Lake Charles, the skyscraper 'formerly known as the Capital One building. It was battered and severely damaged by Hurricane Laura. To the point that there was talk of demolition. But out of that brokenness and despair came this beautiful creation. Which should remind us that just as human hands made something of beauty out of such devastation, so too can the hands of our God make something beautiful out of the brokenness of our human lives. A cross that is associated with death can indeed be a symbol of LIFE. As you and I leave this 'empty tomb' to seek our Lord Jesus out in the world... bearing in our lives His image of life out of death... may we know that we do not go alone; but that the Spirit of the living God is above us to watch over us... behind us to support us, beside us to be our friend, goes before us to show us the way, and dwells in our hearts to give us His peace. And may all of God's broken and beautiful children say... AMEN!