

2020 04 April 10 Good Friday Message Handout: Meditations as if You Were John

One Thing: One of the things that The Apostle John is known for was that he was very close to The Lord Jesus. A couple of the other things is that he was the teenaged disciple during Jesus' earthly ministry and he lived to be an old man, the only one not killed for his testimony of Jesus and the Resurrection. Legend has it that they tried to boil him alive in oil but that the chains melted instead; and so, they exiled him to the prison island of Patmos. There he completed his 5th New Testament contribution (The Revelation of Jesus Christ); the other four are: 'The Gospel of John' (an autobiography/biography of The Lord Jesus Christ as given by The Holy Spirit to John) and the epistles of John (3 letters that John sent to the churches under his care). Let's move beyond legend and look at some of the things John wrote. My idea for this Good Friday observance during the Communist Corona Virus Isolation is for us to look at passages in John's account when he was near Jesus and consider what it would be like to have been in John's place. So, let's get our Bibles and take a look:

- 1.) The Gospel of John Chapter One (this is the 4th book of The New Testament): Read verses 1:1-14. Imagine how, after spending 3 & ½ years with Jesus during His public ministry, and 3 of your friends have already written biographies on Jesus (one focusing on his Jewish-royalty, one focusing on his humanity and one focusing on The Gospel for the Gentiles) you are led by The Holy Spirit to write these spiritual and cosmic things about Jesus. What thoughts or feeling would you have as you considered such majestic things and still could remember the touch of your friend's arm around your shoulders and the sound of His Voice in your ears?
- 2.) Now read from Matthew 4:21-22. John humbly leaves out his name from The Gospel he recorded. But Matthew tells of the calling of John and his brother from their father's fishing business to be his disciples. Think of the conflicting emotions you might have and consider, did John have similar feelings? What do you think he thought and felt?

Perhaps John is recounting the same experience in John 1:35-39. Imagine that endorsement! John the Baptist just called this Man, 'The Lamb of God!' How did this make you feel? What did you think?

- 3.) In Chapter Two we can read about how Jesus went to a wedding and showed love for people. Then He went to The Temple and was angry at the Temple leaders for charging the people money to get in. What did this reveal to John's mind about Jesus?

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- 4.) In John Chapter 3 and Verse 3 through 21, John reports on teaching that Jesus gave the equivalent of a Cardinal or Arch-Bishop. That the man needed to make a personal decision and be spiritually born, or that if he could make this spiritual decision, he was already spiritually reborn. John must have experienced this spiritual birth. Have you? Describe when you made such a decision:

- 5.) It is likely that John was formerly a disciple of John the Baptist. Read what John the Baptist said about his students leaving him and joining with Jesus in verses 3:30 and 3:36. Did John the Baptist mince words? What were his recommendations about converting to Jesus from their birth roots and current loyalties?

- 6.) After spending 3 & ½ years with Jesus, John ends up in an upper room with Jesus and the other 11 main disciples. Jesus says that one will betray Him. The main disciple that everyone looks up to, Peter, leans over to you (John, the teenaged disciple) and gets you to ask Jesus, 'Who?' Your heart races, and you ask. What thoughts run through your mind? (John 13:21-30)

- 7.) Some of the most beautiful spiritual revelations and teaching ever given are recorded between John 13 and the next event. I encourage you to read and meditate upon them. It is so beautiful and so strange, why did Jesus say, 'In a little while you won't see me...?'

- 8.) Now the Passover (Last Super / First Communion) is over, everyone sang a hymn together, Jesus has led you to your regular hideout, where you spend the nights outside Jerusalem. The crowds and Jesus' popularity won't protect Him (or you) out here in the dark if the location is betrayed. (Mark 14:32-42) Jesus has picked you and your brother and Peter and taken you a little further to pray. But it is so hard and you get sleepy and keep falling asleep. Have you ever spent part or half or all of a night in prayer and special communion time with Jesus?

- 9.) Jesus had been arrested. Judas has betrayed. You ran away. But a little while later you take Peter with you; and since you are known there, you get Peter and yourself into the High Priest's palace where Jesus is being put on a mock trial. Imagine escaping the soldiers and running

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through the night, down the grassy pathways and skirting the guards and darting through the cobble stone streets and alleyways and slipping up to the door where you know you could get in big trouble if they found out that you followed Jesus. Have you ever had an adventure in the night where you ran from the police? Was your adventure as noble or innocent? Was John's completely innocent?

10.) You have seen Jesus scourged, mocked and crucified. How does this make you feel? Then Jesus does something shocking, He thinks of the needs of His human parent and gives you charge over her care since He is dying. (19:26-27). Describe your range of emotions as you ponder all of these things...

11.) Jesus has been killed and buried. You mourn all the day, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. Then early the next day, some of the women have come back in a haste from the tomb where they went to minister to Jesus' remains. They have found the stone rolled back. They saw angels and they found the tomb empty! What could be happening?! You take off running there with Peter. You are younger and you outrun Peter. You look in from the outside. But Peter when he catches up goes in. Some say Peter is brave or bold; some say, brash. But he it is that had the bravery or the brashness or the boldness to go in first. What thoughts were you thinking? How were you feeling?

12.) Later Jesus appeared to you and the others (20:19-23). He is alive! He is physically alive! How does this make you feel? What does this make you think about death and Heaven and God and Heavenly rewards?

13.) Jesus appears numerous times across the course of 40 days. One of those times was when you were out fishing with Peter (John 21). Jesus kindly gives special attention to Peter who has maybe been feeling very guilty. Jesus kindly restores him and tells him what he has planned for him. Then Peter, maybe squirming some because Jesus has told him that he will, at the end of along good life and ministry, will be arrested and taken to execution, asks Jesus what will

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become of you. Jesus says that if He wants you to never die until He comes again, it is His business, not Peter's. What did that make you think?

14.) Question from 1st John: Jesus ascends into Heaven but first He gives all of you an assignment to preach The Gospel all over the world and make disciples for Him. He tells you to wait until the Holy Spirit is given in a special way. The Day of Pentecost happens and the Church Age began. During your long and fruitful life and ministry, the churches come under attack from different threats. One of these times you feel called to address the matter. The churches were falling for a heresy (now called Gnosticism) wherein people erred in many ways, but particularly they felt that since Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, they could commit any sexual sin in this life they wanted to. You write to them to encourage their faith and give them hope and love while warning them about this error. Read the epistle known as 'First John' Chapter 1:1 through 2:1. Imagine the burden weighing on this pastor's heart as people he knows and loves are wavering in the faith and falling into dangerous and destructive ideas and practices. Describe how you think you would feel? What would you do about it? Many times pastors have to deal with their own sins in preparation to preach certain passages. Have you dealt with any of these issues?

15.) Question from 2nd John: You have heard good things about this church. You want to encourage them but you feel that they need a little more admonition to avoid error. Read Verses 4, 5, 7 and 9. How do you reconcile God is love with warnings about deceiving people?

16.) Question from 3rd John: Ministers, especially missionaries, apostles, pioneers, church planters, college ministers, traveling evangelists, pastors of new, small churches and the like, rely on the people's giving from established churches. A certain man, has exerted influence to stop these servants of God from receiving support (verses 9 & 10). The Holy Spirit, through Apostle John, has apparently seen fit to call out this wicked behavior and even name the culprit. How do you think John felt about naming an individual? Does considering the teaching in 3rd John change your thinking about giving to The Lord's work? How do you think John must have felt about having to address this issue and name this man?

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17.) Two questions from the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ: You have grown to be an old man. You are the last living disciple to have known Jesus and seen His Resurrection and ascension. You have long been exiled on a prison island. But you have kept up the practice of spending time with Jesus spiritually (read Revelation 1:10) on The Lord's Day (and other days of course) and suddenly your privacy is breached by a Heavenly visitation (1:12-3:22) and what's more, you are whisked into Heaven (read 4:1-2) to see visions about the Last Days. How do you think John must have felt about seeing these dire and glorious things?

18.) After seeing the trials and tribulations of the very Last Days of this age and the rebellion of the people of earth and the anti-Christ and the devil and the false prophet, you get to see the beautiful sight of Heaven coming to earth. Read Revelation 21. How does the thought of this make you feel?

19.) Read Revelation Chapter 22 verses 7-9, 12- to the end. Are you living your life with Jesus first and seeking to please Him?