



By trade John was a fisherman. His father was a fisherman before him. He grew up in the fishing business. It was a prosperous business. His father could afford hired servants. But, John was restless. He had heard of a prophet preaching in the wilderness...a man who was baptising in the region at the Jordan River. John ~~was a fisherman~~, ~~always a fisherman~~, went to hear the prophet John The Baptist preach.

It was a strange sight for young John to see men wade out into the river to be baptised...to respond to the invitation...to witness repentance and conversion. He heard The Baptist preach saying..." I baptise with water, but somewhere among you stands a Man you do not know. He comes after me I am not fit to undo His sandals. Look! There is the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world!"

~~John turned to see to whom the Baptist pointed and he got the shock of his life. It was his cousin, Jesus! son of Mary and Joseph. Jesus - his cousin from Nazareth - the carpenter's son.~~

~~Well now, how would you feel if this happened to you? to one of your cousins? John had a hard time understanding it. It troubled his mind. It disturbed his thoughts. So, the next day he went to see Jesus. He had known Jesus as his cousin all his life. The families got together and his parents visited Nazareth and Jesus played together. His cousin - the Lamb of God. It was almost more than he could understand.~~

~~From~~ From that first announcement by John The Baptist, ~~and his talk with Jesus~~ and to the very end of his days John believed. He makes <sup>MUCH</sup> much of his belief. It's a key word in his gospel. Ninty eight times in 21 chapters...

(3)

believe, believe, believe. He came through it himself...

" He knows that he speaks the truth, so that you too may believe." . Jesus loves us ~~warts~~ warts and all. He loves those who believe in Him. Perhaps this <sup>(15)</sup> one reason why John had a special place among the ~~twelve~~ <sup>TWELVE</sup> laymen...the apostles. If you would know the wonder of being loved by God, have faith. Believe in His Son.

~~John~~ John began right where he was by faith. He grew in love. In his own gospel he is not called by name. Again and again it's "The disciple whom Jesus loved." When ~~they~~ <sup>THEY</sup> sat about the table, John was always closest to Jesus. And, from that table he reports the new commandment Jesus gave them...and us. Listen to His words... "A new commandment I give unto you. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" , This is John's theme. "Love one another and by this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." ( John 13/35) ...There ~~it~~ is... John, a layman fisherman had come a long way in his life. Instead of love, in his younger life with Jesus, he had an infectious, bounding enthusiasm that bordered on radical, fanatical sectarianism .

One day when John had been on a preaching mission , he saw something that disturbed him greatly. He hurried back to Jesus to report. " Master! We saw a man casting out ~~demons~~ <sup>demons</sup> in your name! He was not one of us, so we tried to stop him !...and Jesus replied... "Do not stop him. No one who does a work of devine power in my name will be able in the same breath to speak evil of me. For he who is not against us is on our side" ( Mark 9/ 38-40) . At this point John was a long way from his later advice to "love one another.

Here, John exposed his young, enthusiastic, sectarian spirit of his early days with Jesus. He thought... we alone are able to cast out demons. We alone are the true disciples of Christ. We alone are the ones who are saved.

And, we have this same attitude today... They do not think <sup>AND NOT</sup> as we do so they will not reap the rewards of Heaven. Or, they are an off-the-main-stream, non-sectarian bunch of hand clapping, shouting people who will certainly be too noisy for heaven.

My friends, it is well for all of God's children to remember and take heed. God is limitless. God cannot be crammed into a suitable narrow persuasion of one group of believers whether they are a mainline congregation or not. Jesus judged sectarianism, seperationism,

diviseveness, and exclusiveness when He said "No one who does a work of devine power in my Name will be able, in the same breath, to speak evil of me. Do not stop them."

DO NOT JUDGE THEM

And, John, humble enough to take this rebuke from Jesus, says it over and over again throughout his life... "Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1st John 4/7)

Now, don't let John's statements lead you to think that he was a tame, milk-toast, whimp type of layman. He was sensitive and gentle of spirit, but he had fire, boldness, courage and a temper. Both he and his brother ~~Andrew~~ <sup>JAMES</sup> were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus. It took courage, devotion and dedication to stand there out in the open before everyone at the foot of the cross. It took courageous love. None of the other apostles, as far as we know were at the cross...only John.

COURAGE

It took ~~courage~~ and devotion and dedication to stand there in that screaming mob with Roman soldiers all around. It took courageous Christian love..

And, in the midst of His agony to whom did Jesus turn? - John. He addressed his mother saying "Woman behold thy son...John behold thy mother. And, from that time on John took the mother of Jesus into his home. She was completely entrusted to John the beloved of the twelve.

After the resurrection the apostles were forbidden by the authorities to preach the Gospel. They were imprisoned when they did so. Peter and John answered the charges against them saying "Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you more than unto God, you be the judge. As for us, we cannot cease to speak of the things we have seen and heard."

There is the legend about John which is not without foundation. When he was so old that he could no longer walk, they carried him from his home to the place of worship. Time after time they would ask him to speak and all he would say was "Little children love one another.". Some one asked him why he said nothing else. He replied, "Because this is our Lord's commandment. If we fulfill this nothing more is needed."

- How does one become beloved of Jesus?
- Is it believing in Him?
- Is it becoming humble before him?
- Is it confessing our sins, taking rebuke?
- Is it having the courage to follow him?

- Is it standing firm in our faith?
- Is it extolling the Christian Gospel?

The resounding answer is YES!

There is a secret to a Christ-like life. There is a way to grow in love. The secret, if you want to call it that, is to become a loving person...not through intellect. Not through deeds alone, but in our hearts, minds and souls. Now, this is not to play down intellect or deeds. John had an amazing grasp of spritual truth. He had great spiritual insight. He had a gifted mind. John gives us the the ministry of incarnation. He understood the meaning of the comming of God into the world. It was John who wrote, "In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. And The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This, the opening of John's gospel stands supreme over all other literature.

John understood Jesus and His mission better than any of the other disciples.

- He had the capacity
- He felt deeply
- He knew what it was like to be close to Jesus. and he knew that being close to Jesus in all things was, and is, the secret, and in his gospel he says so when he writes...

" If we walk in the light, as He is in the light He who says He abides in him ought himself also so walk , even as He walked!" And he writes.

" A new commandment I give unto you that you love one *ANOTHER.*"

But, how can we love unless we get close to the source of that love? How can we progress and grow unless we get so near to the source of that love <sup>THAT</sup> the life of Jesus Christ spills over into ours. The secret to growing in love is found in experience, not education. This is not to disparage education, but John was not a learned man. But, he writes in his gospel about the Word made flesh. John

John had no rabbinical training. He is described as an unlearned fisherman.

The experience of being in the presense of God lifted John above the others. Meditation on the truth, on God, on Jesus...this experience of relity...of His presense...this walk in the light as He is in the light is the way to grow in love.

- Why is it that our faith falters at times?
- Why is it that our strength in the Lord is weak?
- Why is it that our Christian convictions diminish at times?

We read the New Testament, but we do not take enough time to think about it...to let its reality sink deep into our souls. We pray, yet we really do not pray because our minds stray elsewhere even as we speak the words of our prayers.

- We wonder why we are here?
- We wonder what our purpose in life is?
- We wonder where life is taking us?

We must think about Jesus...about His Cross... about His resurrection...about His Kingdom...about His *PURPOSE for coming here on earth.*

(8)

Then, and only then, will His presence in our <sup>LIVES!</sup> be far more real and meaningful. John did not have a fine, formal education. But, he had great and extensive experience. He could not rely on a highly-developed intellect. But, as the song goes, he had heart...miles and miles of heart.

It is not without foundation that the symbol for John is the eagle. To mount up with wings...to fly ever higher...to live ever nearer to heaven...this is John. And, for him, that was a long road...from temper to tenderness...from anger to adoration... from sectarianism to strength in love for one another and for the Word made flesh - our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a road that we <sup>MUST</sup> walk as we grow closer and closer to Jesus.

THE SENSITIVE LAYMAN

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

Jesus speaks, and we must listen <sup>to what</sup> he says, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you, you also love one another." ...Let us pray.

Our Father God, help us to be sensitive, loving, caring laypeople <sup>I</sup> in your church. Help us to see the positive, the good <sup>I</sup> in those <sup>I</sup> with whom we work on our jobs...in those with whom we worship in this church... with those in our families whom we love deeply, but sometimes try our souls, Help us to remember John, your beloved apostle. Help us to remember his words. Love one another...and in doing so draw ever closer to your love for us. In Jesus name we pray...Amen.



MT. - 1ST JOHN 4/12-21

NO ONE HAS BEHELD GOD AT ANY TIME; BUT IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD ABIDES IN US, AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ABIDE IN HIM AND HE IN US, BECAUSE HE HAS GIVEN US OF HIS SPIRIT.

AND WE HAVE BEHELD AND BEAR WITNESS THAT THE FATHER HAS SENT THE SON TO BE THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER CONFESSES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, GOD ABIDES IN HIM, AND HE IN GOD.

AND WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AND HAVE BELIEVED THE LOVE WHICH GOD HAS FOR US. GOD IS LOVE, AND THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN LOVE ABIDES IN GOD ~~AND GOD~~ AND GOD ABIDES IN HIM. BY THIS, LOVE IS PERFECTED WITH US, THAT WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT; BECAUSE AS HE IS, SO ALSO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD.

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE, BUT PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR, BECAUSE FEAR INVOLVES PUNISHMENT, AND ONE WHO FEARS IS NOT PERFECT IN LOVE. WE LOVE BECAUSE HE LOVED US FIRST.

IF SOME ONE SAYS, "I LOVE GOD," AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR, FOR THE ONE WHO ~~DOES~~ DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN. AND, THIS COMMANDMENT WE HAVE FROM HIM, THAT THE ONE WHO LOVES GOD SHOULD LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO."