

The Face of Faithfulness: John

The Message.....

Christianity began with a group of men gathered by Jesus, but at the cross Christianity resembled a women's movement. Of the twelve men Jesus made apostles only one was faithful to the end. Four faithful women stood with this one man until the end. One of them was Mary, Jesus' mother, and her sister. Mary Magdalene was another of the four, and with her was the wife of Clopas. But today we want to focus our attention on John. His face beneath the cross is the face of faithfulness. A study of John's presence at the cross will help us on our own pursuit of faithfulness.

Sermon Research and Notes

I. The Faithfulness of John: Witness at the Cross

- * John was an eyewitness to the events surrounding Jesus' death on the cross.
 - * His presence at the crucifixion demonstrates his loyalty and unwavering commitment to Jesus, even in Jesus' darkest hour.
 - * It also demonstrates his faithfulness to Jesus since it was possible that an angry mob might hurt him. (All of the other apostles did not come to the crucifixion.)
 - * From the cross, Jesus entrusted His mother, Mary, into John's care, stating, "Here is your mother".
 - * This deeply personal exchange highlights John's position as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", indicating a profound relationship and trust with Jesus.
 - * This "holy duty and honor" was shared by John and Salome, his mother, who also remained faithful to Jesus.
 - * Jesus' mother, was probably an "emotional wreck" during the crucifixion, yet John remained by her side.
 - * John, having watched his Savior die, sparks an enduring commitment to Jesus' life and ministry.
 - * By taking Mary into his home from that time on, John demonstrated immediate obedience and faithfulness to Jesus' dying request.
- * Was it really a call of duty?
 - * Yes and no.
 - * Yes, because he felt a duty to Jesus to stand beneath the cross to support Jesus and then to accept His mother, Mary, into his home.
 - * No, because, for John, it is much more than mere duty to Jesus.
 - * John was at the cross because of his love for Jesus. Just that simple.
 - * He was aware that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and he understood, perhaps better than any of the other apostles, that Jesus was bound to the cross by His love for them.
 - * If Jesus could die on a cross out of love, could not John stand by that cross through the ordeal?
 - * Gratitude and love compelled him to be there.

II. Faithfulness Unto Death: A Call to Christian Perseverance

- * In Revelation 2:10, believers are explicitly told, "But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life" (NLT).
 - * This call to faithfulness came within the context of suffering and persecution that the early churches, such as Smyrna, were experiencing and would continue to face.
- * "Faithfulness unto death," could be understood to mean, "Be faithful for all of your life."
 - * It was a call for faithfulness regardless of what life might bring.
 - * To the people of Smyrna, this would have been a call to faithfulness even at the expense of life.
- * Jesus Himself prophesied that His followers would be persecuted, just as He was (John 15:20).
- * The book of Revelation as a whole was written to provide:
 - * assurance and comfort to the suffering and persecuted, emphasizing God's ultimate victory over evil and death (John 16:33); and
 - * the tree of life and citizenship in the holy city to those who "keep" what is written and remain faithful.
- * Jesus as the Empowering Example
 - * Jesus is identified as "the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (Rev 2:8), signifying His supreme authority and victory over death.
 - * Jesus is consistently described as "the faithful and true witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14), who "never changes" (Heb 13:8).
 - * As believers, individually and corporately, we are called to reflect Jesus' example of love, service, humility,

sacrifice, and obedience, particularly when suffering.

- * Was John in any danger at the cross?
 - * Since mob rule was in force when Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified, it is entirely possible that John could have faced an angry mob who would want His followers persecuted as well.
 - * This did not stop John from coming to the cross to support Jesus and His family.
 - * John was prepared to be faithful even if it cost him his life.
 - * This is the quality of faithfulness that the Lord wants in each of us.
- * **If our faithfulness has limitations, it is flawed.**
- * Remember, God commends endurance and trust in Him during challenging times, affirming that He will carry His promises through to completion.
- * A recurring theme in Scripture highlights God's protecting His people from danger and is present and active even when He seems absent.
- * God sends the Holy Spirit
 - * Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Advocate to His disciples, empowering them to endure and to prevent them from falling away during suffering (John 16:1).
 - * The Holy Spirit provides the necessary power for believers to be witnesses and live for God, confirming they belong to Him.
- * Context of Persecution and Witness
 - * Revelation was written with a background of persecution and suffering, calling the Church to be prepared for death with strong confidence of victory.
 - * John aims to inspire his hearers to become "witnesses" (martyrs), even to the point of martyrdom. Jesus Himself was martyred.
 - * This faithfulness may provoke persecution, described as "tribulation" or "social marginalization" for refusing to participate as the world's dictates.
 - * The ethical imperative in Revelation is patient endurance (hypomonē), which is better understood as nonviolent resistance or resistance demanding active engagement.

III Our "take-aways"

- * To repeat, if our faith has limitations, it is fundamentally flawed.
- * Our faith must stand when the world around us is falling.
- * To be faithful requires focus and attention to the one in whom we give it.
- * We can cope — healthily — in times of crisis when our faith is rooted in our love for Jesus.
- * Remember, John. So, if necessary, be the only person standing against wrong-doing and injustice.
- * We will suffer. Take Jesus with you when you do. That's faith!
- * Our rewards?
 - * We will have Jesus' approval. Well done, good and faithful servant.
 - * We will have Jesus' trust. We have been given responsibility to share His love to others.

Bonus information

The Nature of John's Transformed Faithfulness

- * From "Son of Thunder" to Apostle of Love:
 - * Initially, John and his brother James were called "sons of thunder" by Jesus, likely due to a fiery and impulsive temperament, such as their willingness to call down fire on a Samaritan village.
 - * However, John was profoundly transformed by Jesus' love.
 - * This transformation is evident in his self-identification as "the disciple whom Jesus loved".
 - * His writings, including the Gospel of John and his epistles (1, 2, 3 John), are heavily focused on the theme of love, mentioning it over fifty times.
 - * John emphasized that true love for God is expressed through obedience to His commands, and that love must involve actions, not just words.
 - * He was part of Jesus' "inner circle," alongside Peter and his brother James, indicating a privileged and intimate relationship.
 - * Living Out Discipleship — John's faithfulness is evident in his continued role as a leader in the early church after Jesus' ascension.

