

The Disciple Jesus Loved

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Preacher: Gary Webber

[0:00] Well, let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much for just the privilege of being able to worship together. Lord, and even though I don't know everybody in this room, and even those I know, I don't know very well.

God, thank you that we are a part of a big family, and because of the blood of Jesus, we are united together. And Lord, we thank you, Father, that by your grace, you've invited us to be adopted into this family.

Thank you for your word, Lord, which speaks to us, and which has the power to transform us through your spirit. And so we pray, God, today as we open your word that we would be transformed.

God, that you would change us to be more like Jesus, so that anything that we're coming in with, Lord, that is not of you. Father, we just pray that you would do the gentle, loving, and even sometimes hard work of just chipping it away.

So that all that might remain would be you. Lord, I thank you for these brothers and sisters, for their faithful service to your kingdom here at this church.

[1:07] And I pray, Father, that what we do today in worship, what we do today in opening your word, we just build your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. And in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Well, it's great to be with you, and I just want to say, just from last night and through today, and then really over the past few months as I've gotten to interact primarily with Matt, what a blessing it has been to be invited to be here today.

I'm really honored to come and get to share with you. And I was sharing last night, I love the church. I just love the church. And it's been just a joy to see how God is working in and through your church and what an exceptional congregation you are and what a blessing God has given you in leaders who have been here as long as they have and served as faithfully as they have, even to have a pianist who's been here 30 years.

And it's just a real treat to get to come and be here. And what an encouragement it's been to my heart as well. Well, you know, I don't go out and speak very often, and after you hear me today, you'll know why.

But I struggle a lot with personal introduction. How do you introduce yourself? I don't know if you've ever thought about that when you go somewhere. You know, I think this is true primarily for men, although women, I think, as more and more women have entered professional careers, maybe it's true for you.

[2:28] For a lot of men, you introduce yourself by what you do. You know, I am a whatever or I work for whatever. It's kind of how we don't know what else to say. And so we just kind of resort to that as an introduction.

Sometimes we introduce ourselves maybe by whose child we are or whose our kids are. You know, when I would go to my kids' schools, you know, I'm Caleb's dad or I'm Emma's dad.

And then, you know, if I would be at the place where my dad worked, you know, I'm Larry Johnson's son. Or however it would be, you just introduce yourself in all kinds of different ways.

And I don't know if you've thought about this, but when you read the Gospels and you read through the Gospels, the authors of these Gospels are not the main characters. They are really servants of the Lord, inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Gospel account.

But they're nonetheless, for many of them, particularly for John, he's a part of the story. And so as you've been walking through John's Gospel this year, and some of you have also been reading along with the day-by-day with the disciple Jesus loves, you have gotten to know the story of Jesus.

[3:38] That's the main highlight of the story. But as you've done that also, there is something special about John that is sort of in the text right beneath the surface, that you're picking up on who he is as well, and his story.

Just like all of you who are here today who follow Jesus have a unique story that God has been writing across the pages of your life as you have been a follower of Jesus. God's doing something unique in you as you follow Jesus.

That the Gospel isn't just written on the pages of our Bible, but it's in fact written across the pages of our lives as we faithfully follow him. And so today, I don't want to focus just on one episode in John's Gospel.

First of all, I wasn't sure where Brother Matt and Brother John were in the Gospel, so I didn't want to step on a passage that they might have been focusing on. Instead, I want to look at one particular episode in John's life, and this encounter isn't only a change in how John identifies himself, I believe it also reflects the change in how John saw himself.

That John saw himself one way before this encounter, and then after this particular encounter with Jesus, John not only saw Jesus in a different light, but because he saw Jesus in a different light, he understood himself in a different light.

[5:06] I believe it reflects a change in how John saw himself, and I also believe it can reflect a change in how we see ourselves 2,000 years later.

And so if you're here today, and you are not a follower of Jesus, my prayer is that this encounter that John had with Jesus, that transformed how he understood Jesus and understood himself, will help you to understand who Jesus is and how you understand yourself as well.

But even if you're here today, and you've been following Jesus for decades, my prayer is maybe, maybe this is another step in the journey of you understanding even more of who your Savior is, and therefore even more of who he's made you to be.

Now John could have identified himself in a lot of different ways. He had been a fisherman early in his career. He was a son of Zebedee, so he could have introduced himself that way.

He eventually became an apostle, and so he could have been, he could have, as he's writing the gospel, he could have referred to himself as John the Apostle. I mean, have you ever thought about that title?

[6:12] Like, if you had that title, you might want to use that title. And that makes you sound really important. He could have said that I'm John, and I was an eyewitness of everything that I'm writing about.

And he certainly was an eyewitness. He could have said that he was a church leader. He could have said that he was an author of five books of the New Testament. Now, John couldn't have actually said that because he wouldn't have understood what the New Testament was, because it was still being written as he was writing these five books.

But you could look back and say he could be John the author of five books of the New Testament. But when he told the story of Jesus, he repeatedly used a different descriptor about himself.

He called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. The disciple whom Jesus loved. Now, it was not unusual in the first century when people were writing that they did not refer to themselves in the first person.

In fact, if you ever read like a scholarly article, you know, the author never refers to themselves in the first person, which is why you know my book is not a scholarly work, because I talk about myself too much.

[7:16] They don't say I or me or even we. They talk about themselves in the third person. The author noted, or the author of this book noted something.

John didn't do that. He just called himself, in the third person, the disciple Jesus loved. Now, there's a lot of debate as to why he did that. One reason that some people say that he did that is because John might have been a little arrogant.

Maybe he was a little proud of himself that I am the favorite of Jesus' disciples. You know, I can tell you this with all honesty, and my siblings will agree, I was my mother's favorite.

And I frequently remind my siblings of that, that I was mom's favorite. So that could have been one reason why he did it. He certainly was in competition with Peter.

You can see that even on the way to the tomb. They got into a foot race, and John wants you to know that he beat Peter to the tomb. He doesn't want you ever to think for all of Christian history

and all church history that Peter got to the tomb before he did.

[8:17] He was there first. So there was a little bit of a competitive spirit in him, so that could have certainly been some of it. But what if that wasn't merely John's way of concealing his identity, or even bragging about himself?

What if it was the way that, in fact, he was revealing the truest part of who he was? That he, through all of the things he could have said about himself, that at the end of his life, as he's a very old man, the thing that mattered the most is that I and the disciple Jesus loved.

That's not to say you aren't a disciple Jesus loved. It's just to say I am someone Jesus loved. He wasn't always called the disciple Jesus loved.

In fact, he doesn't refer to himself that way in the early part of the gospel at all. And some of what I'm going to say today is a little bit extra biblical in terms of biblical scholars who have gone back and tried to study the lives of the apostles and what happened to them, what we know of them, just from early church history and early church fathers.

We know that his father was Zebedee. We know that his older brother was James. We know that he worked with Andrew and Peter. So the four of them probably grew up on the Sea of Galilee fishing. So they all knew each other very well.

[9:34] We know that he, along with the other three, left their nets and left their family business when Jesus came along, this itinerant preacher, and invited him to follow him.

We know that John was ambitious. John was competitive. And John was driven. How do we know that? Well, look with me, if you would, just quickly at Matthew chapter 20, verse 20 and 21.

He gets his ambition honestly. Look at what his mother did. Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and kneeling down asked a favor of him.

What is it you want? Jesus asked. She said, grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other on your left as you come into your kingdom. Now don't miss what Matthew is saying here.

Because remember, Matthew himself was a disciple of Jesus. He wants you to know that these two brothers had the audacity to send their mama to ask Jesus if they could be the most important disciples.

[10:35] So there is a drivenness about John. And notice, Matthew doesn't say that John was embarrassed by this fact. In fact, it might have been John's idea.

Mom, why don't you ask Jesus if we can sit at the right hand and at the left hand of Jesus? But this wasn't the only time this conversation happened. John was probably, most people agree, the youngest of the 12 of Jesus' apostles.

And one of Jesus' constant companions, Jesus had the 12, but then there were the three who were with Jesus everywhere he went. He was in the inner circle. It was him and it was his brother James and it was also Peter.

Only these three were ultimately invited with Jesus up onto the mountain and they witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus. You remember that moment when Jesus' glory was revealed and Moses and Elijah showed up, this amazing moment.

Peter, James, and John were there to see the whole thing. And Jesus told them, don't tell anybody what you've seen. But then Luke tells us right after this in Luke 9, verse 46, an argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

[11:46] Now when you read that in context of what just happened, here's what I think happened. Peter, James, and John came down the mountain. They weren't allowed to tell anybody about what happened, but they're arguing about how the fact, we must be the greatest because guess what we got to see?

We can't tell you. We can't tell you. I mean, we would tell you how great it was, but we're not allowed to tell you. But clearly, we must be the greatest of the 12.

And John, because he can run faster than Peter, is probably thinking, well, I'm greater than Peter. And I'm certainly greater than my stupid brother, right? There is an arrogance and a competition that you see when you're reading the text.

These are real people. One of the things I love about the Bible, Old and New Testament, is that nowhere in the Bible do the authors of these texts try to make these people the heroes that I think we sometimes try to make them.

We try to strip them of all their humanity. And I think the text is very obvious. These were very human, very flawed, very broken people who were saved by grace, who were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the work of Jesus Christ.

[12:58] Now, only these three were allowed to go up on the mountain. So Jesus asked them what they were arguing about. Remember, so as they're having this argument about who's the greatest, Jesus asked them what they're arguing about, and they didn't want to answer.

So Jesus told them whoever wanted to be great had to become what? the least, the servant of all. This is what Jesus said. So Jesus is already chiding them and saying, you guys are arguing about who's the greatest.

I'm telling you, it's the one who will serve, and it's the one who is the least who will be the greatest. Now, John was also highly competitive. In another passage of Scripture, just a few verses later, John has this idea.

Master, said John, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to stop them because he is not one of us. Now, this goes to, some of you have probably been in church long enough, you know, when one church on one corner competes with another church on another corner, and suddenly, you know, people who are supposed to be on the same team building the same kingdom are in competition with one another.

I know that doesn't happen anywhere around here, but in Jacksonville, that can be a problem sometimes. And it's not new to us. It's actually original. Even all the way back, you see this encounter. What's going on? There are people, other people, who are beginning to teach in Jesus' name, and John sees them, and John goes to Jesus and says, hey, you've got to put a stop to this. [14:18] This can't go on. So John is not only ambitious, he's not only competitive, he's driven, and he is also, what you see in the drivenness, he had no trouble believing in Jesus' authority or power.

He had no trouble believing that Jesus was who he claimed to be, but he would have wielded Jesus' power and authority very differently. For example, they go into a Samaritan village, and the village rejects Jesus and the disciples.

And look what John says in verse 54 and 55 of Luke's gospel. When the disciples, James and John, saw this, saw that the Samaritans had rejected them, they asked, Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?

But Jesus turned and rebuked them. In other words, John, the same one who wants to be the greatest among the apostles, the same one who wants Jesus to stop anybody else from doing anything in his name, is now the one who's saying, hey Jesus, you want me to call down some thunder, like John could really call down thunder and lightning to destroy them.

Do you want us to call down thunder and lightning and destroy these people who just kicked you out of their village? No grace in that. There's no humility in that. He is a driven, competitive, ambitious, young man.

[15:33] And so Jesus gave James and his brother John a nickname after that, called them the Sons of Thunder. That's right, the Sons of Thunder. They earned the name honestly. But before John became known eventually as the Apostle of Love, can you imagine everything I just described to you?

And he ultimately became known among the early church as the Apostle of Love. Jesus called this young man a son of thunder. He was ambitious, he was competitive, he was territorial, he was occasionally explosive, and apparently spending time near Jesus can change somebody.

Spending time with Jesus can transform you. It can change you from a competitive, ambitious, bossy, driven person into somebody who is known as a person of love.

Contrast his early life with what we know about John's later years. After Jesus ascended into heaven, John remained in Jerusalem and he had been given a very specific task to take care of Jesus' mother, Mary.

Of all the apostles that Jesus could have asked to do that, he asked John. And so John spent many years caring for Jesus' mother Mary.

[16:55] Only after Mary's death did he go on to Ephesus where he led a church there. By this time he was a much older man. He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian between the year 90 and 100 A.D.

where he wrote the book of Revelation. After Domitian's death he returned to Ephesus where he wrote his gospel and the three letters that we have come to know in the New Testament as 1st,

2nd, and 3rd John.

He died around the year 100 A.D. at the age 90 making him the oldest apostle and likely the only one to die of natural causes. He outlived every other one of the apostles.

He wrote five books of the New Testament. Only Luke and Paul wrote more of the New Testament than John did. John became known as the apostle of love. He was gentle, he was long-suffering, he was loving, he was humble, and what made the difference?

What transformed him? And here's the thing, it wasn't just that he met Jesus because he met Jesus and then was still the competitive, driven, ambitious person that he was.

[17:59] We see that. If the gospel was the last thing John wrote, and we don't know for sure the order of the books, but if the gospel was the last thing he wrote, then how John identified himself in the gospel gives us a really important clue.

He did not primarily identify himself as an apostle, an evangelist, an author of the fourth gospel, a father of the church, a martyr under Domitian. By the end of his life, John was no longer seeking position, he was no longer seeking power, he was no longer ambitious.

John described himself instead as the disciple Jesus loved. In the first 12 chapters of his gospel, it does not appear one time.

There is, it appears at a critical moment in John's gospel, and I think John, who is a brilliant writer, did that on purpose. He wanted you, I think, to know as the reader the moment he began to see himself differently.

Not as someone who was privileged because he knew Jesus, not as someone who was powerful because he knew Jesus, but as someone who was loved because he knew Jesus. He began to see himself in an entirely different way, and he does this at this critical moment.

[19:12] So look with me at one verse, John 13, John chapter 13, verse 1. Here's what John writes. Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave the world and to return to his father.

He now showed them the full extent of his love. The upper room. And you know what happens. You know what Jesus does.

He has the Lord's Supper. He takes the basin of water. He kneels down. He washes all the feet of those who are there in that place, even Judas' feet.

Peter protests. Jesus says, if I do not wash you, you can have no share with me. And Jesus washed Peter's feet and John's feet and Judas' feet.

And from this point forward, from this moment, not before this, but from this moment in John's Gospel forward, John used the name the disciple Jesus loved to identify himself.

[20:11] and he used it more than once. He didn't discover his identity by looking more deeply into himself. John discovered his identity by looking more clearly at Jesus and what he came to do.

So what I want to do, just for the few minutes that we have remaining, because I smell the food and I know you do too, is I want to look quickly at every time John called himself the disciple Jesus loved.

So there are four specific places that he does this in the rest of John's Gospel. And I think this has something really significant to say about it. What if each of these, and I don't know this, but what if each of these moments that John refers to himself as the disciple Jesus loved, what if it's John's way of putting a highlighter on something in the Gospel?

That could be the case. Let's look at each of them just to see. First of all, we see it at the table that love draws us close. Look at John 13, 23. It says, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved was reclining at table by Jesus' side.

John, of all the apostles, probably maybe even a preteen or a young teenager, is close enough that the Scripture says he is leaning back against Jesus, and he asks him a question.

[21:31] Think about how intimate that is. my son is about to be 30 in November, and I was thinking about how there is a moment, and dads, you never know when this is, when your son will no longer snuggle up to his dad anymore.

Right? There's a moment when that happens, and I wish I could think back to when it was the last time that Caleb snuggled up against my chest, because I would love to just go back in time and remember that moment, but John is young enough that he is still comfortable being that intimate with Jesus, and he draws up close to Jesus, and the emphasis isn't that John earned this favored position, that he hadn't done anything to get this position, it's that the disciple who knows he is

loved is free to draw close to Jesus, and I wonder if you know that you are that loved, that you are that loved that you can draw near to Jesus and lay your head on his chest.

I wonder if in your prayer time you could just imagine yourself like John sitting next to Jesus and just snuggling up close to him.

That's the kind of intimacy that John experienced with Jesus and that I think all of us who are disciples Jesus loves can experience. The disciple Jesus loves doesn't have to hide from Jesus. The disciple Jesus loves doesn't need to impress Jesus or keep Jesus at a safe distance. Love draws us close to Jesus. You know, this morning in Sunday school John was teaching through Exodus and we heard the story of the fire on the mountain and how we had to keep a distance, you know, put a border around the mountain so that nobody gets close lest they die.

[23:25] Do you know that when Jesus came and the temple veil was torn in two, we are now able by his grace to draw near to this infinite powerful God. Think about that.

It reminds me of the picture. Do you remember the picture John F. Kennedy Jr. and he's standing there leaning back against the desk looking like he's having a very important conversation but under the resolute desk John John has the door open and the resolute desk sticking his head out that this little boy was the son of the most powerful man in the world at the time and yet he had the intimacy this is my dad.

This is my dad. That's what we have because of Jesus. Where have shame and fear and spiritual performance kept you at a distance from Jesus?

Where is the sense that you need to achieve or that you need to overcome some sin in your life?

Where is that keeping you from Jesus when it is only when we draw near to Jesus that we are freed from the shame that sometimes keeps us far from him?

Love draws us near. The second place we see John call himself is at the cross and that we learn that love gives us responsibility. Look at John 19 verse 26. When Jesus saw his mother remember Jesus is on the cross when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby what did Jesus then ask the disciple whom he loved to do?

[24:47] He said take care of my mother. Now note this is completely speculative on my part but nearly everyone else at this moment has disappeared. There are no other disciples at the cross with Jesus.

They're all in hiding. John's the only one who's there. John remained and Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to him. The disciple Jesus loves takes up an earthly mission that comes out of the fact we are loved.

That because Jesus has loved you he has called you and he has set you apart for a specific mission. The love of Jesus doesn't make John passive. It doesn't make him lazy.

It makes him faithful. Love is simply something John feels. It gives him courage to remain and it gives him the responsibility to serve. I wonder if the love of Jesus inspires you to serve and to give of yourself.

To find the widow and the orphan that James says is the essence of what true religion is all about. That we are all called as John was called the disciple Jesus loved we have all been called and left with a mission and a purpose to serve those who are around us.

[26:03] The cross doesn't just draw us to Jesus and to the love that he has for us it also compels us to go away from the cross and to live a life of sacrificial service.

I believe this and if I get to heaven and I'm wrong I will apologize to the Lord I wonder if John's ministry to Mary is why he was preserved to be the last apostle because as he is sidelined from the story you don't read about John much in the book of Acts we read about Peter you read about Paul you read about James his brother is martyred where is John this whole time is it just possible that Jesus mission that he gave John to take care of his mother actually preserved John for decades until Mary finally passed away and then John was free to take up his position and at that point he was the only apostle who remained and carried the witness of Jesus he might have been the last one who was still alive who had witnessed and experienced all of the things that he had seen in the resurrection I don't know if that's true but I think that the mission Jesus gave John had significant impact on the life of John and the mission that Jesus has for you will have significant impact on you as well that God may be working through the mission he's given you not just to serve the person that he's called you to serve but to actually transform you the third place we see John use this title is at the empty tomb that love awakens faith now look with me at this passage of scripture this is John 20 verse 1 and 2 now on the first day of the week so Jesus has been in the tomb

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the tomb that the stone had been taken away from the tomb so she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple we know who the other disciple is the one whom Jesus loved he wants you to remember that he came to the other the one whom he loved and said to them they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him now the disciple Jesus loves races to the tomb and beats Peter there he wants to make sure you know who was faster he gets to the tomb first and begins to see that death does not have the last word being the disciple Jesus loves awakens within us a faith and a hope in the future that we understand and know that love did not die on Good Friday love does not die on the cross it is demonstrated on the cross but it does not die there the hope of the gospel is found in the empty tomb if Jesus had just died on the cross and there was no empty tomb he was no different than the thousands of people who were executed on Roman crosses but the disciple

Jesus loves knows that the cross is not the end that the empty tomb gives us hope to realize that as we go through a fallen and broken world our hope always is in the resurrection that Jesus will return and make all things new that he is working and finally we see the fourth place Jesus uses John uses this title is on the shore that love recognizes Jesus this is after the resurrection Jesus has appeared a couple times and so he's appearing one final time in John chapter 21 verse 7 and it says this the disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter is the Lord and I love here again that John wants you to understand that it was him who told Peter that that was Jesus on the shore don't miss the humor because I think it's there for a reason John recognizes Jesus before the other people in the boat do he looks across the shore and do you remember the story that they were fishing and they'd been fishing all night and they hadn't caught anything now if that sounded familiar it should because actually when you read the gospel of Luke and the gospel of John the story begins and ends almost the same way they've been out fishing

Peter James John Andrew been out fishing all night they hadn't caught anything Jesus comes he's teaching he gets on the boat and teaches from the boat and then tells them to go out and they said we were out all night didn't catch anything he says go out and do it anyway now at the end of the story they've been out fishing because Peter got tired of waiting on Jesus do you remember this the resurrected Jesus but he hadn't shown up in a couple days he's like boys they don't catch anything and then suddenly this yahoo on the shore is saying cast your nets on the other side and they do it and they catch this huge haul of fish and it is John the disciple whom Jesus loved who recognizes Jesus listen a life spent receiving the love of Jesus gradually learns to recognize the presence of Jesus if you spend your life experiencing day in and day out the real love of Jesus then you will be the first to recognize his love when he makes it apparent listen this idea of a daily time with

[31:12] Jesus as I was writing this my first the first draft of the book that I wrote was really just my own journal I just really read John every day and wrote and wrote from it and and as I went through that practice and then as I was inspired to that it's only through the repetition day in and day out of the exercise of love like a husband for a wife a wife for a husband a mother for her child a father for his son it is in that day by day expression of love that we truly understand and recognize the voice of those that we love right now my guess is for most of you!

if whether she's still with you are not if you heard the voice of your mom call your name you would know it was your mother you would know her voice if you heard the voice of your dad you might recognize his voice even even if you haven't heard it in decades see when we spend time in scripture every day we're not just gathering information as much information as there is to gather and as much as we should study and learn scripture we are learning to recognize the voice we're learning to recognize the character we're learning to recognize the activity of Jesus so why did John choose the disciple Jesus loves as a way to describe himself not because he believed he was more lovable than the others he used the name as the story moves towards the cross because the cross finally tells us what love actually means it's the love of Jesus that John recognizes and then the recognition that even someone as broken and as flawed as he was is somebody that Jesus loved Jesus didn't love John because John had overcome his ambition Jesus didn't love John because he had overcome his anger or his pride Jesus love was the power by which John overcame his ambition and his anger and the pride was overcome Jesus loved you don't have to change anything about yourself to be the disciple Jesus loves but when you realize you are the disciple Jesus loves it will change everything about you it's just the opposite of what we think we think if I could get my life cleaned up if I could just overcome this sin then God will love me no if that's what you think you

will never truly experience the transformation that comes when you know that you were loved even while you were still a sinner Christ died for you you are the disciple Jesus loves I believe John is inviting his readers to see themselves as the disciple Jesus loved John wants you to read this gospel from his perspective as if you are the disciple Jesus loves because you are and my question for you today is do you believe the

Sunday school answer is oh sure absolutely amen brother I believe God loves me but do you really the darkest parts of you the parts of you that are still caught in sin the parts of you that are still ambitious and still driven his love is not based on your performance or your behavior he loves you not for who you should be he loves you for who you are even in your savior for you nor will your successes listen nor will your successes make him love you more you have done nothing to earn his love you can do nothing to earn his love grace I love this quote by Philip Yancey grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love us you are the disciple Jesus loves whose approval are you seeking have you convinced yourself that if only a certain person would love you if only a certain person would respect you if only a certain person would notice you approve of you that you somehow will be complete can I tell you you will never find what you are looking for in someone else's approval how would it affect you to know that you right now are the disciple

Jesus loves and you're thinking but wait Gary you don't know me you don't love is calling you it is calling you out of sin it is calling you out of brokenness it is calling you into relationship to be adopted as the son as the loved son the beloved son of our heavenly father it's not enough to know that I'm the disciple Jesus loves I have to also then understand and accept that being a disciple Jesus loves means that I am also called to love others when I really believe that I am a disciple Jesus loves it will transform me into being somebody who can love even my enemies someone Jesus loves and for whom Jesus died is transformed by that love in John 13 34 and 35 as he ends this encounter with Jesus notice what he quotes Jesus as saying a new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as

[36:26] I have loved you so you also are to love one another by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another Jesus loves us we receive his love and then his love becomes visible through us to the world that's watching the clearest evidence that we know ourselves as disciples Jesus loves isn't that we feel better about ourselves it is that people around my life was transformed by Jesus but I first experienced the love of Jesus through people who had been loved by Jesus I first began to understand the love of God as I saw that love lived out in people whose lives had been transformed by that love so at our church I try to give people something practical at the end of every message something practical to do and what I want to do first thing in the morning before you do anything else

I want you just to pray this prayer Jesus before I do anything for you today help me remember that I am a disciple that you love Jesus before I do anything will you just help me remember that I am loved by you before I perform anything before I sin before I will at some point today you know that person drives me crazy and I am going to see them and I am going to sin in my mind and in my heart before a word comes out of my mouth would you just remind me that I'm the disciple you love Lord before I try to impress you with the good works that I plan to do for you today will you just remind me that I'm the disciple you love and maybe you would read one of these scripture passages I put a few of them there you can write them down take a picture of it but John 13 1 John 13 23 John 15 9 it's all over John's gospel just pick one and read it and be reminded that you are the disciple Jesus loves receive his love the second thing I'm going to encourage you to do! ask yourself this question Jesus who needs to receive your love through me today it could be a stranger that you pass on the street it could be a family member it could be a co-worker It could be a student who you sit next to in class Jesus who needs to receive your love through me today then choose one deliberate action be encouraging!

John wasn't claiming that Jesus loved him more than the other disciples although I think he did want you to know that maybe he loved him a little bit more than Peter John was confessing that the love of Jesus had become the truest thing about him that the love of Jesus was the most important thing about him and that by the grace of God every person who belongs to Jesus can not because you earned it not because you have always been faithful not because you are more lovable than somebody else but because Jesus loved you to the end and gave himself for you so I want you to do something with me it's going to require a little participation my church isn't always real good at

this but I can tell you you to be better at it I want you to and

I want you to say you are the disciple Jesus loves all right now that was the easy part that was the easy part now here's what I want you to do and this is going to seem strange but this is true I want you to say I am the disciple Jesus loves ready let's say it together ready I am the disciple Jesus loves you know why that's hard you know why that's hard because I know myself I know myself I know how prideful I am I know how broken I am I know how far I have to go and it is hard for me to say I am the disciple Jesus loves but it's true and it's changing me it's changing me day by day by day and if you are here today if you are here today and you find yourself struggling to believe that you are the disciple

[41:17] Jesus loves maybe you have never accepted his love can I just tell you today is the day do not count on tomorrow today is the day that you can receive that love and know no matter what you've done no matter where you've been that you are the disciple Jesus loves that Jesus loved you so much that as he's dying on the cross as all the sins of the world are poured out onto him that his love for you was unquestionable and he spread his arms to show you the extent the full extent of his love for you and that you can receive that love today I'm going to ask you right now if you'll bow your heads with me and if you're here and you have never received the love of Jesus this is a great church there are people here who would love to pray with you and talk with you who would love to start a journey with you because it's not just it's not just one decision in one moment but it's a day by day reality whether you've been following

Jesus for five seconds or whether you've been following him for 50 years we are all in a process of learning more and more about what it means to be the disciple Jesus loves so maybe today you are here and you committed your life to Jesus years ago but you are not living as one who is loved by the Savior life you like John may have been following Jesus for years before the moment comes that you fully understand the full extent of his love for you my challenge for you is to not just know it but to live it out to go live like you are the disciple Jesus loves because you are father thank you thank you for your word lord thank you that we get such a real example in the life of John of someone who was not perfect but lord who was transformed because of your love god we want that we need that we are hopeless without that god i pray i pray for the man who's here today who is on the edge of believing and accepting that who struggles as i still struggle to believe it can be true because it sounds too good to be true lord may today by faith that man accept the truth of your love for him and may he surrender for that woman who's here today who has accepted may may may may may may may may may!

As she looks at herself in the mirror, as she compares herself, Father, to so many others, Lord, and she struggles to believe and just live in the peace and security of knowing your love for her. May today be the day, God, that she accepts that she is a daughter whom you love and for whom you died. Lord, for the teenager who's here today, who's confronted with so many lies, so much just misinformation and, Lord, the comparison on the Internet and social media is just driving them to feel worthless and unloved.

Father, today, may they understand that Jesus loves them, that Jesus loves them, that God created them and forged them. They are fearfully and wonderfully made and that the best, purest love they will ever receive is the love they will receive through Jesus Christ.

[45:03] Holy Spirit, we ask you, move and work in this time to draw your church closer to you until we all believe and live out the truth that we are the disciples that you love.

And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.