

Adult Bible Study
First Presbyterian Church, LaGrange, GA
The Beloved Disciple

John 1.37-42

37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' 39He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. 40One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

John 13:23-26

21 After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' 22The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; 24Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' 26Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.'

John 18.15-16

15 Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.

John 19:25-27

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' 27Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

John 20: 2-10

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

John 21. 4-8

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards— off.

John 21.20-25

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' ²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' ²²Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' ²³So the rumour spread in the community* that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?*'—

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Notes:

The phrase the disciple whom Jesus loved or Beloved Disciple is used several times in the Gospel of John, but in none of the other accounts of Jesus. In Christian tradition the Beloved Disciple was always considered to be John the Evangelist himself, but in the last century alternative identifications have been proposed.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is your best guess as to the identity of the Beloved Disciple
 - a. The author of the fourth Gospel
 - b. John the Apostle
 - c. Mary Magdalene
 - d. Lazarus
 - e. John Mark, the author of the Second Gospel
 - f. A fictional character representing the ideal Christian
 - g. A fictional character representing all disciples throughout history who did not see the historical Jesus but believed through the testimony of the original disciples
 - h. A fictional character representing Gentile (non-Jewish) converts to Christianity
 - i. John Zebedee
 - j. An anonymous follower of Jesus outside the disciple band
 - k.
2. The Beloved Disciple is usually pictured as a foil for Peter. He serves as a contrast to Peter. All of this is to say that the Beloved Disciple generally appears with Peter. Do you think this observation provides grounds for identifying the "other disciple" in chapter 18 as the Beloved Disciple? How about the unnamed disciple in John 1?
3. What do you make of the fact that the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved appears never to be named as are the other disciples?

4. How would you evaluate this rather contemporary theory that the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel was once universally believed to have been authored by John of Zebedee, but in fact was actually authored by Mary Magdalene. It is further posited that she was the Beloved Disciple of the Fourth Gospel and, therefore, the founder and leader of what has come to be known as the Johannine Community. Indeed, as the theory goes there is more evidence pointing to *her* authorship of the Fourth Gospel than there ever was pointing to authorship by John. Take out the masculine pronouns (which is exactly what this theory alleges) and you have some very provocative possibilities: *"²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother..."*
5. If the Beloved Disciple serves as an ideal, what qualities would you list as ones we need to imitate?

