

# Sermon for St John's Day - John 21: 20-25

## Jesus of All Time

Here we are at the end and the beginning; the end of another year and the beginning of another year. Today we reflect on beginning and endings, of the time that has been and the time yet to be experienced. As we reflect on the year gone and the one about to begin we will consider the Apostle John.

John<sup>7</sup> was a Galilean fisherman, the son of Zebedee and brother of James. Along with Peter and James, John was in the 'inner circle' of the twelve disciples. He is mentioned in company with Jesus at Simon Peter's home in Capernaum, at the house of Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, on the Mount of Transfiguration, on the road to Jerusalem, and at Gethsemane.

In Acts, John appears with Peter at the Temple when Peter healed the lame man in the name of Jesus. They were both arrested by the Temple authorities and put on trial before the priestly council, but released with a warning. After the martyrdom of Stephen we find John again in company with Peter in Samaria to approve the spread of the Gospel there. Thereafter John disappears from the New Testament except where Paul mentions him as a 'pillar' of the Church in Jerusalem. John is traditionally identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and with him at the Cross.

John was there to see and hear all the big things to do with the life, suffering and death of Jesus – especially that moment when the dying Jesus gives John the charge to care for his mother, Mary, and Mary the charge to love John as her own son, as Mary and John stand at the foot of the Cross.

John gives witness to what he has seen and heard in his Gospel, his three letters and the Book of Revelation. As this year ends and new year begins, he declares that our lives have hope and peace in all our ending and beginnings, for he speaks of Jesus as the One who is **Saviour of all time**; Saviour of the past, the present and the future. One who can redeem past mistakes, render past regrets powerless and mistakes of the future bearable.

John's witness, out of all the other gospel witnesses, Matthew, Mark and Luke, gives the **broadest possible depth of view to Jesus'** life, death and resurrection. John can name Jesus the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things, all people, all time.

For John, Jesus was from the beginning. This Word of God was witness to the very beginning of all things, and indeed the One through whom all things came into being – when light was made from darkness and human beings were called into being and given the gift and responsibility of managing the world.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made...In him was life, and that life was the light of the world”*, John says of Jesus, the Word of God (John 1:1-4), says John.

And then even more astonishingly, *“The Word became human flesh, and made his dwelling among us and we have seen his glory”* (John 1:14). And then, *“No one has ever seen God, but God, the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known to us”* (John 1:18).

John tells of Jesus in big brush terms – This is Jesus of all time in the biggest, most grand view! Just to make sure we trusted this cosmic witness to the cosmic Christ, he and his colleagues in our text, give their solemn signature to what John has seen and heard. *“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his witness is true”*, the crowd of witnesses declare (John 21:24).

So we are left with a mystery – a cosmic truth that the God of all creation, of all stars, sights, sounds and beings has made himself heard and seen by a faithful witness, and this witness has been written for us so that we may believe that Jesus is our Saviour of all time.

But not only is this witness to Jesus as Saviour of all time **true** for John, but **personal** too.

Oh, the things that John must have witnessed – indeed, he says that if he were to write them all down, the whole world would overflow! He must have had such an intimate insight into the very heart and soul of Jesus.

In his gospel, he is known as “the one whom Jesus loved”. And then a little more specific: *“The disciple whom Jesus loved: the one who leaned back onto Jesus’ chest in the Upper Room on the night before Jesus was betrayed”*, (John 21 20b). John reclining at Jesus side and hearing what he has to say. What a picture that creates. Friendship, trust, intimacy, learning, questions, safety between master and teacher, friends a colleague, God and human being....

But John has already painted another picture of another reclining and hearing. John the witness, declared right at the beginning of his account that Jesus is God, the One and Only who reclines at the Father’s side and Jesus has made the Father known to us.

So, just as Jesus the Son reclines at his Father’s side and hears what his Father says to the world, so John the evangelist reclined at Jesus’ side and heard from Jesus what the world needed to hear.

Grace and Truth have come to the world from the Word of Jesus and John has heard that and seen it acted out. John declares to all people this New year that Jesus is Saviour, for what has been in our lives and for what will be in our lives and our lives, with all their goodbyes and welcomes, all their letting go and taking on new things, all their closures and new possibilities, all the beginnings and endings – our lives are totally surrounded by the Word of God, the love of God, the truth of the apostles, the fellowship of God the Father and his Son, all made possible by the working of the Spirit – the Counsellor, the one who takes what is known from the Father and makes it known to human beings.

So, what does this mystery and this truth mean for you as you see out the old year and welcome the new?

If Jesus is our Saviour for all of our time than this new year will be his time.

If Jesus is the Word of God which is from the beginning of all things to the end of all things, then from our beginning at baptism to our ending and new beginning at the second baptism, when we pass from death to life – the Word of God will surround us and keep us.

If this love of God in Jesus is the thing that surrounds us throughout all of our beginning and ending, then we as disciples of Jesus lean on him,

recline with him at his meal and we hear what he says and tell others what we have seen and heard.

And this seeing and hearing, this speaking the truth in love may cost us dearly as it did the Twelve. All but John died early for their witness to the truth and John was imprisoned on a prison island for it (the island of Patmos). And what if it does cost us dearly – in whatever way – being rejected by others, being considered silly, ignorant, childish, unworthy of attention, conversation, promotion?

Well, John saw and heard this word from the risen Jesus for all time;

*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me....*

*Blessed are those who wash their robes,*

*that they may have the right to the tree of life,*

*and may go through the gates of the city,*

*I Jesus, have sent my messenger to give you this witness for the churches.*

*I am the Root of Jesse and the Offspring of David, the Bright Morning Star*

*The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"*

*Whoever is thirsty, let that one come – let that one take the free gift of the water of life"*

(Rev 22:12-17)

Jesus is God's life and mercy; God's light in our darkness for all time.

He has been in our last year and he will be in the next one. Now is a good time to reflect on; what you have seen and heard as you have reclined with your Lord this last year; the things you have learned, the things you have noticed about yourself and others; the things you have learnt from the Word. As you reflect, put your faith in this Jesus, to whom John gives trustworthy witness.

End this year thanking the Lord for what has been and what he has shown us. Enter this new year with the peace that Jesus is our Saviour for all time – including the new year ahead. He is here at the beginning of it and he will be there at the end of it even if we have been called home to be with him before years' end – we are in him and will be forever.

To Jesus the Word of life, the beginning and the end, be all glory. Amen