

May 17, 2020-Sixth Sunday of Easter

Mysterious 'Beloved Disciple'

In John's Gospel, there is a nameless disciple who is very close to Jesus, but somehow isn't "seen" by the other Gospel writers (at least they don't mention him). John refers to him as the other disciple or the disciple Jesus loved. This disciple appears four times in John's Gospel:

- He is next to Jesus at the Last Supper table, and Peter tells him to ask Jesus which disciple is the betrayer. [The other evangelists make no mention of this.]
- When Jesus is arrested, Peter follows him to the high priest's house, and the other disciple gets Peter into the courtyard. [The other evangelists don't say how Peter managed to get in.]
- As Jesus is dying, the disciple whom Jesus loved is at foot of the cross with the mother of Jesus. [No other evangelist mentions any disciple at the foot of the cross.]
- On Easter morning, when the women come back with news of the empty tomb, Peter and the other disciple run side by side to the tomb. [The discovery of the empty tomb is described in the other Gospels, but there is no mention of this other disciple.]

No one knows who this beloved disciple is. Originally he was assumed to be John himself. However, in recent years, most scholars think otherwise. It is thought that he was someone in the early Christian community who had been very close to Jesus, but not famous during Jesus' lifetime. Later, people remembered that he was a holy person, close to Jesus-but they didn't remember his name.

Hindsight is 20/20

We all know people for whom our attention and approval would have meant a great deal, but we didn't realize it at the time. So often, it's only after they've gone from our lives that we realize a lot of things about someone, and maybe wish we had done or said something differently.

This is how it often was for the apostles. There was so much about Jesus that they didn't understand. It was only later, 20 or 30 years afterward, in many instances, that they realized what had taken place.

Maybe my first thought is about how dumb those fishermen were. Why didn't they understand? But often I do the same thing. I am so close to what is going on that I miss underlying meanings and see only the routine happenings. It is only in hindsight that I appreciate many things, many people.

I wonder how often I do the same thing to Jesus in my life. He is part of my life today. How many overtures has he made to me that I have missed? I can think about the times when I never realized how much he cared, how much my caring meant to him. I can think about the day's events, and about how much he is present in all of them.

That's why I have to pray. Prayer helps me to step back a bit and appreciate Jesus' presence in my life every minute of the day.

'But they understood nothing of this; the word remained hidden from them and they failed to comprehend what he said.'

-Luke 18:34