

A Place Called Calvary

by G.W. North

The sermon highlights the significance of faithfulness in discipleship, as demonstrated by John's presence at the cross and his reward for it.

Scripture: John 19:26

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Discipleship"

Description

G.W. North reflects on the profound loyalty of Mary and John at the crucifixion of Jesus, emphasizing their unwavering support despite the agony they witnessed. He highlights John's unique role as the disciple who remained faithful to Jesus, even when others faltered, and how this faithfulness led to the privilege of writing the Gospel that bears his name. North underscores that true discipleship is a lifelong commitment that requires total dedication and the willingness to forsake all for Christ. He warns against the neglect of less popular scripture passages that hold vital truths about discipleship, urging believers to embrace the full scope of Jesus' teachings. Ultimately, he calls for a response to Jesus that is heartfelt and genuine, reflecting the life He lived.

Transcript

Who could have blamed Mary if she was bitter? She was hurt, very hurt. She saw her son's helplessness, so did John, and neither of them knew what was going on. They followed with the crowd who followed Jesus to the cross, loyal to the last. They could not forsake Him even in His death throes: bravely they went and stood by the cross, as close to Him as they possibly could, so that Jesus in His agony could see them, and He spoke to them, 'Mother behold thy son' He said, and 'Son behold thy mother'. If Mary had been asked she would not have chosen another, and John felt he could not have been given a greater privilege. His mother: It was such an honour; John felt he was being asked by Jesus to take His place. Was he to be to Mary what Jesus had been to her? He knew he could not possibly be that to her, but from that moment he took her to himself and after the day was through he took her to his home also. But not yet, he would not leave his Lord even when He cried out in His God-forsakenness though all forsook Him he would stay; what a true disciple he was.

John had been in that upper room when Peter had said. to Jesus, 'though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended'. Peter was not alone in this, for each one of the disciples had also added his own firm attestations of loyalty to Christ, even unto the death, John with them; perhaps they all had meant it, but when it came to it he was the only one who kept his word. This is probably the

reason why he begins his Gospel on this note, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God: the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made'. Not that standing by the cross he understood anything much; he was probably numb with grief and too overcome to speak one word of comfort to his new 'mother' when the last indignity was heaped upon their loved one in death. A soldier thrust his spear into Jesus' side 'and forthwith came there out blood and water', and John knew he had witnessed something vital; what it was he wasn't sure.

Later he understood it to be all part of the great revelation of new birth, a secret revealed only to the few. His faithfulness at the cross earned him a vast reward, though at the time he had no thought of the future, only purpose of heart to be true to Jesus at all costs. Jesus was the Word: it was always like that with God: it all begins with the word, it did in creation, it did at the incarnation and it did with John. He said he would be faithful to the death and he was. He went to the Judgement Hall with that intention, he was well-known there as a disciple of Jesus; metaphorically speaking, for Jesus' sake he put his head into the lion's mouth that day. John was a wonderful man, a true disciple of an even more wonderful man, who gave him a most wonderful reward -- the ability and authority to write the most wonderful of all Gospels and the account of the end of all time. Such is the reward of faithfulness in a disciple who desires to remain anonymous, or else only to be known as the disciple who Jesus loved.

There are certain sections of scripture that are favourites with us all, they enjoy world-wide popularity among Christians and deservedly so. Everywhere they are memorised or quoted or preached on, to the blessing and salvation of millions of souls. Because this is so it is inevitable that other portions of scripture suffer neglect, and for no other reason than the popularity of the more well-known portions. The Gospel of John has suffered very much by this. Although it is so well-loved among us, there are some chapters which are far more popular than others, consequently their truths and teachings find more frequent exposition from pulpits. By reason of this they become better known than the less-favoured passages, though these are of equal inspiration and truth with them and flow from the same pen. In some instances this neglect has done almost irreparable harm, for the loss sustained by the churches is incalculable and has had tremendous detrimental effect; in no area has it wreaked more havoc than in this area of discipleship.

As we have seen, discipleship is a life, not an affectation. It is something I have to learn from Jesus and it cannot be learned by scholarship; it can only be learned by living. By the Lord's definition discipleship is not only life, it is lifelong, demanding utmost dedication; there may be no reserves and no going back -- we must not even consider looking back. In order to follow the Lord each disciple must be prepared to give up everything else, including creature comforts and chosen profession. The call of the Lord must take precedence over all other calls and be the prime cause and concern of the life. These are big demands and the Lord does not attempt to minimise or modify them in one degree. It is these demands that make the soul realise who He is; no mere man has the right to make the claims He makes on a fellow human being. He makes them though, and He expects us to respond wholeheartedly because He is God. But the response is primarily to Him: He said 'I will draw all men unto me', He did not say He would draw them to His teachings -- they were, as Peter's words testify, 'Lord to whom else can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'. As Jesus said, 'the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and life'; the way He lived, the life He lived in the flesh openly before men, was exactly the same as He thought within. His public and His private life -- His open and His secret life -- were the same. The life of true discipleship He Himself lived is the kind of life to which He calls us.

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