

MULLINS LENTEN CHURCHWIDE LENTEN STUDY
SUNDAYS @ 9:45 A.M.

MARCH 10, 2024

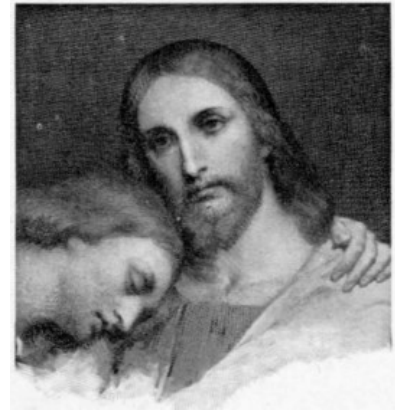
SESSION 4: THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

Biblical Foundation:

John 13:21-26, 33-35

John 21:20-24

John 19:25b-27



Who Was (or Is) Jesus's Beloved Disciple?

AJ asks in annoyance, “What are the other disciples, chopped liver? Isn't Jesus supposed to love everyone? ...Jesus plays favorites?”

Now consider, have John the Evangelist's mentions of a particular “Beloved Disciple” ever annoyed or confused you? Why or why not?

- AJ mentions some potential “Beloved Disciple” candidates that Bible scholars and readers have identified, including:
 - John the son of Zebedee, the purported author of the Fourth Gospel;
 - Lazarus (on the basis of John 11:5, 36);
 - Mary Magdalene (because of her faithfulness to Jesus and “the greater likelihood of a male versus a female author gaining an audience”).

What do you think of these options? Are you aware of others?

- AJ also mentions the Beloved Disciple might be “a composite figure representing who any disciple could be or should be.” How helpful do you find this possibility, and why?
- AJ points out the Beloved Disciples' ultimate anonymity focuses our attention on how he is remembered, and asks, “[I]f our names were unknown, by what titles or descriptions would we want to be remembered?” How do you answer AJ's question.

The Beloved Disciple at Table with Jesus

Regarding John 13:21-26, 33-34:

- “Although he may have been with Jesus since the calling of the first disciples,” AJ points out, Jesus's last meal with his disciples before his death is the scene in which John first explicitly mentions the Beloved Disciple why do you think this might be? Do you remember where and when you met your closest friends? Does the setting matter?

- John’s Greek in verse 25 literally says the Beloved Disciple was reclining on Jesus’s breast, “a position of intimacy” (compare Abraham’s bosom, Luke 16:23; see footnote to verse), as AJ highlights. She states some English translations “suggest an embarrassment with male friendship and male bodies in proximity.” How would you assess our cultures comfort with intimate male friendships, and why? How might pointing to Jesus and the Beloved Disciple as a model of such a friendship help men today? How might seeing the Beloved Disciple as a woman change your reading of the Last Supper or the Crucifixion?
- Was there ever a time you felt particularly close to Jesus, as if you were leaning on him? Do you think of your relationship with Jesus as “intimate”? Why or why not?
- Commenting on Jesus’s commandment in verse 34, AJ writes, “There is nothing new about the commandment to love one another” (see, for example, Leviticus 19:18, 34). Why does Jesus call his commandment a new one? How does he love his disciples (see also John 13:1)? What does Jesus say will result from his disciples obeying this commandment?
- Jesus tells his disciples that where he goes they cannot follow; but, as AJ suggests, obeying his commandment does mean they “can live as Jesus would have wanted (them) to live.” Who are some of Jesus’s “Beloved Disciples” you believe are living or lived as Jesus wanted? Why?

The Beloved Disciple’s Fate

Consider John 21:20-24:

- This episode occurs after the risen Jesus appears to some of his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. The Beloved Disciple recognizes Jesus first (21:7). What might this detail tell us about the Beloved Disciple? Do you have your own image of what the risen Jesus looks like? How do or can we more readily recognize the risen Jesus in the world and in our lives?
- Why do you think Peter asks Jesus about the Beloved Disciple (verses 20-21)? How, if at all, might Peter’s discussion with Jesus immediately prior (21:15-19) relate to his question? Why do you think the Evangelist reminds readers of the first explicit mention of the Beloved Disciple at this point?
- Why did the early followers of Jesus whom John knew and/ or for and to whom he wrote his Gospel believe the Beloved Disciple would not die before Jesus returned? What wisdom, if any, does this case study in “rumor” offer us today as we seek to understand and interpret Jesus’s words and teachings?

The Beloved Disciple at Jesus's Cross

Read John 19:25b-27:



- Unlike the disciples in Matthew and Mark, and closer than the disciples in Luke, the Beloved Disciple, with the women, “stayed the course and remained at the cross.” How do or can Jesus’s Beloved Disciples today stay near Jesus’s cross? Do you imagine yourself at the cross or at a distance? How does your image of Jesus change as you move from one location to another?
- “There’s a comfort to being seen through Jesus’s eyes,” writes AJ, “and there’s a blessing to know that we are seen doing what we should be doing in terms of caring for those who love us.” When, if ever, have you felt Jesus has seen you caring for those who love you, or for others who are in need of care? How can you and your congregation further develop “sight” like Jesus’s sight, noticing and supporting caregivers?
- By entrusting his own mother to the Beloved Disciple and presenting the Beloved Disciple to her as her son, Jesus is “setting up a new family” based on his commandment in John 13:34, states AJ. How is a community based on Jesus’s commandment to love one another like and unlike a family based on biology, marriage, or adoption? How does or should it differ from other “families” we choose for ourselves or in which we find ourselves?
- To what extent does or should Jesus’s “new family” confirm and/or challenge how society today understands family?
When are you most and least likely to think of your faith community as your family?
Why?
- AJ points out that the love Jesus commands, which the Beloved Disciple here shows by taking Jesus’s mother into his home, is “a practical stance, an action.” In what practical, active ways does your congregation love each other?
- How can and do congregations prevent the image and language of “being a family” from becoming exclusionary? What practical, inclusive actions of love does your congregation regularly take toward those who aren’t “members of the family”?
- Speaking of Jesus’s mother’s and the Beloved Disciple’s new relationship to each other, AJ discusses how the living cannot replace the dead but can console each other. What are the most helpful and healing ways your congregation has supported someone whose loved ones have died?

In Closing

As AJ notes, the Fourth Gospel's final reference to Jesus's "hour" of exaltation and glory is the "hour" the Beloved Disciple takes Jesus's mother into his home. She writes,

[E]ven time can be sacralized. Any hour can be the time when discipleship is recognized in love. The next time someone asks you, "What time is it?" and you see the hour, these verses from John might echo in your mind. If they do, you've moved from clock time to sacred time.

Draw a large, circular clockface on scrap paper. Write notes about or simply sketch acts of loving discipleship you perform, or could perform, at several hours of the day. Think about where you usually are at a given hour, with whom you are immediately in relationship, and how you can take practical action for another's good. Write or draw at least three actions for the morning, afternoon, and evening, or one for each hour Jesus hung on his cross. You do not need to show or talk about your completed clockface with anyone unless you wish to do so.

Today's artwork is:

- "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved," by the French painter Ary Scheffer (1795-1858).
- A detail from "Christ on the Cross with Mary and St. John" (c. 1457-1460) by Rogier van der Weyden.



How to Set Up Amplify Media:

Go to: <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify>

1. Click the face icon.
2. Click access code.
3. Enter Mullins congregational Access Code: RXKSNZ to login.
4. Set up your account.

You can get the Amplify app for your phone or tablet as well.