

We have gathered here this morning to give thanks for John the beloved disciple, and for his insight into the mystery of Christ. When we talk about John, we should have no confusion with John the Baptist. We are talking about John the Apostle and Evangelist. John was one of the sons of Zebedee who left their nets and followed Jesus as soon as Jesus called them to be his disciples. By trade John was a fisherman like his father. The family business was moderately successful as they had the ability to hire servants (Mark 1:20). They lived near Capernaum on the Northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Within the gospels John is clearly portrayed as one of the twelve apostles whom Jesus called to be with him, to go out and preach the gospel and to drive out demons in his name. John is also called the beloved disciple on several occasions and during the Last Supper was sitting next to Jesus and leaning on him. When Jesus tells them that one of the disciples was to betray them, Peter gestures at John to find out who he was talking about. John, leaning against Jesus asks him, "Lord! Who is it?" Jesus answered that it was going to be the one with whom he was going to share the bread. Jesus dipped the bread and gave it to Judas and told him to do quickly what he was about to do. Satan had taken control of Judas and he was going to betray Jesus.

John is also the disciple who was at the site of the crucifixion along with the mother of Jesus. On the cross Jesus commits his mother into the hands of John and tells him to take care of her. Likewise, he tells Mary that John was going to be her son. Even in the post-resurrection appearance while Jesus was talking with Peter and telling him to take care of his sheep, Peter is inquisitive to find out what will be the future of John. Jesus however, doesn't give him a clear answer and says, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this people thought that John would not die before the second coming of Christ. However, that is not what Jesus had said.

In John's gospel particularly two key themes are highlighted: faith and eternal life (John 20:31). Eternal life is the life of the coming age made available to believers now. John explicitly states that faith in Jesus Christ is the way to life. John portrays Jesus as being present right in the beginning of creation and that through him all things were made. John tells us that Jesus offers us life and he was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. John then talks about the Baptist as being a witness to Christ so that all may believe in him. However, even though Jesus came in as the light of the world the world did not recognise him. This has been the response of human beings down through the centuries with regards to the claims of Jesus. People out rightly rejected him and were not willing to see him as the Messiah.

Jesus came to his own people and they themselves rejected him. yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God. In other words John is telling us to become true members in the family of Christ. We are to receive Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. Faith in Christ is the way forward to receive salvation. John also reminds us that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus Christ took human form and came and lived amongst us. Jesus went through the same struggles like us and yet did not sin. Therefore, we can take encouragement that he knows our struggles and understands us.

John in his letters tells us that he was an eye witness to the life of Jesus from the beginning of his ministry till his resurrection. However, the knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah was revealed to them by God through the life giver and anyone who came to him through faith would be saved. This was the message that John and the other disciples set out to proclaim. John himself informs us that Jesus did many other signs and miracles which are not recorded in his book but he says that these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name. This morning he continues to present that offer of life through Christ to each one of us. May we truly respond and believe in Christ by faith and receive this life eternal.