

## **THE MAN WHO CHANGED MY WORLD**

### **Dr. George O. Wood**

In just a moment we'll be reading from the first chapter of the gospel of John, verses 38-40. At 4:00 on a first century spring afternoon a young Galilee fisherman's world began to change. Over six decades later he would take pen in hand and as the last living disciple writes the words, which your eyes now look upon. The gospel of John, the fourth gospel. Now as an old man, in his 80s or early 90s he looked back through the telescope of time. Back to the moment when he was a young man, back to the moment that was the most significant moment of his life. The moment when he met Jesus, the turning point. Alone of all the other disciples or gospel writers, he leaves us the record of the precise hour of the day when he first began to follow Jesus.

“Jesus turned and saw Andrew and John following and said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi (which means teacher) where are you staying?’ He said to them ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about 4:00 in the afternoon.”

Biographical glimpses of John in the gospels reveal him as coming from a rather financially secure home. His dad owned a family fishing business and was prosperous enough according to the gospel of Mark to have employees. His good Jewish mother had great ambitions for her son. Ambitions which fueled the fiery temperament of John and his older brother James. And caused others to nickname them Boanerges “sons of thunder.” That was the nature of their character. Not content to settle upon a career in the fishing business and eventually take over half ownership of the family firm. John as a young man drifted south from Galilee along the banks of the Jordan till he came to a spot in the Judea wilderness where a new prophet with an Elijah like character proclaimed the word of God, announced the presence of one who was coming as Messiah and baptized persons who came to him from all over Palestine. John the son of Zebedee became the disciple of John the son of Zachariah. It was this John the Baptist who first introduces Jesus to the world and who introduced John to Jesus with the strange word: Behold the Lamb of God.

I'm sure that as a young man of perhaps 20 John had no idea, not the least inkling of what would have been involved in that strange appellation of the one who stood before him God from a 40 day fast in the Judean desert and deeply tanned by the desert sun. What could it mean? The Lamb of God.

Like student who rapidly switches colleges or quickly changes majors, John in the short span of months had jumped from the world of business to the world of religion, had succeeded from transferring from the seminary of the vastness to the school of Jesus. So students if you've been changing directions lately, don't worry. It's the last change that counts.

After meeting Jesus, John never again changed direction. What made John stick? What made him want to stay more than one day with Jesus? What made him want to spend a lifetime fulfilling the Lord's invitation to him, Come and see. When he came to Jesus what did he see? That day and in all his years. What did he see?

If we come to Jesus, can we see the same thing that John saw? I'm sure of one thing, in fact several things, which Jesus revealed to John which John, saw in Jesus as he came.

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First I believe that John saw in Jesus the truth. Truth! Not the kind of truth that two plus two equals four. The kind of truth that you learn in a history textbook or a mathematics book. Or a science class or a sociology or psychology class. Not the kind of academic truth, truth as we commonly define it. But real truth. A truth from the inward nature of life and the heart which asks the question, where did I come from? Who am I? Where am I going? Does God exist? Can I know him?

All these questions are deep within John as he is bidden by Jesus, Come and see. When you come to Jesus you will see truth.

Day by day in the presence of Jesus as the fibers of truth will be so woven together until at last they form an unbreakable bond, John saw in Jesus someone who is truth. Who not only talked about truth but who lived truth. Who preached truth and who practiced truth. Who when he said forgive, forgave. When he said fast, fasted. When he said love you enemies, he loved his enemies. Who when he said serve others, took a towel and washed the feet of his disciples. The years with Jesus found John finding one who never betrayed his friends or his heavenly Father. Although Jesus was without sins, John saw that Jesus did not parade his righteousness outwardly, as did the scribes and Pharisees. He saw that Jesus never watergated – lied or cheated. Jesus has the courage John saw to be true to his convictions even though truth to those convictions cost him his life.

When Jesus spoke things happened. Never did he speak to something and it fails to happen. The essence of truth is does one's word come to pass. So Jesus ordered water to become wine and it obeyed. He spoke to the deaf and incredibly they heard. He saw the blind and gave them the power to see him. At the tomb of the dead man he called forth and the result did not leave Jesus standing as a tragic figure whose words lacked power. There is power in what he said.

Jesus in regard to himself prophesied the place of his death. The manner of his death, the time of his death. And not a word of Jesus fell to the ground unfulfilled. He said he would break the power of death and on the third day he threw the frail ropes of death aside. He said he would rise again on the third day and on that day he came alive, out of the tomb and electrified his friends with his presence. They heard him, touched him, saw him, ate with him, spoke to him. Watched him as he ascended into heaven. John was a partner to one whose words like no other man had come to pass.

Jesus told the disciples he would send the Spirit and he did. He said he would give them power and he kept his word. He told them he would be with them always and he was.

So as John pens this gospel in the 60 years he has had the chance to follow the invitation of Jesus, come and see, in those 60 years John had never found anything less in Jesus than truth. Which leads me to the conclusion that it's not enough for me, not enough for you to believe that Jesus was a good and great man. That he rose from peasant obscurity to a prominence in history. That he was great moral teacher. That he exemplified love and humility and sacrifice for others. All these things are good and they're true. But Jesus must be more than that for he claimed more than that. And to be truth he must be what he says – the Son of God.

So if he declares to me that if I confess my sin he will forgive me, he keeps his word. If he says he will take my sin down to death on the cross with him, he will keep his word. If he says that in

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that day he will bring me to himself either through his coming or through resurrection, then no longer need I fear death or the grave. For he is with me. He is a faithful friend, so well I may ask, To whom else shall we go? It is Jesus who's the truth. Jesus who has the word and the gift of eternal life.

John found in Jesus the truth and you may find in Jesus the truth. For if you follow Jesus you will find that Jesus is truth. By the way when Jesus first calls, he'll not do a lot of arguing with you. He did not say to John "I want you to attend a five day seminary and here are 436 reasons why you are to believe upon me as the Messiah." His invitation was very simple "Come and see." For it is in his abiding presence that one comes to know the truth.

John found in Jesus truth. But I think he also found in Jesus love. For John became known as the disciple of love, the apostle of love. John could never escape the marvel that is reflected at the heart of his gospel John 3:16, "God so loved the world that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life." That verse has been in our lives for a long, long time. I can remember it was the first thing I learned from the Bible. Because it's been around for so long it is possible in moments to forget when it was fresh and new. Would you like to have had the excitement of John who had the task given to him by the Spirit to write a gospel? He's coming along and he comes to a spot early in his gospel where the Spirit reveals to him the language he should employ. He didn't have a chapter division and he didn't have a verse category. But out of his inner being comes the witness of his spirit: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believe is in him should not perish but have everlasting life." John had known the Son.

Can you imagine the excitement that must have been in John as he turned to a friend who had been in the room perhaps with him while he was writing and said hear what the spirit says of Jesus. God so loved the world that whosoever that is in John 3:16 included John. He would walk in such close company with Jesus that he would become known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Sometimes I look at that term and think, "Did Jesus love John more than the others? Were the others somehow less loved?" That's not the intent of John's using the word. When it is said that he is a disciple whom Jesus loved he means that he is kept and supported and assured of Jesus' love. It also means that in a physical way he had come close to Jesus and touched him. For it was John who had laid his head against the heart of Jesus.

I think that all of the disciples could have had the same physical closeness to Jesus, by the way. But I think it was John alone of the disciples who overcame the reserve of convention and the fear of what other people would think to be embraced by Jesus' love.

Too often we are too reserved in the showing of our true feelings. John was a person who let love flow from his life because it was flowing into his life from Jesus.

Too often the people's lives we most admire are distant people. People we may not know too well. Movie stars or political figures – not many today we strongly admire I suppose. Persons who are at a distance somehow seem larger than life but when you get close to people they seem real life and therefore not much larger than life. It is often true that when we come close to people our idealized image of them begins to change. We see them as they really are.

No where does this process stand out more strongly than from the transfer from courtship to marriage. One does not fall out of love. But simply, all of a sudden, because of marriage love

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gives one the ability to see out of the corners of his eyes at some of the things in the room that he had been previously missing.

But John walked with Jesus and he saw him close up. He walked with Jesus through cities and towns, over hills and valleys and level places, down traveled roads and dusty trails. He was a partner to Jesus as he bivouacked in the open night air or as he lodged in houses. He had the opportunity to listen as Jesus taught the crowds. But he also had that supreme opportunity to hear Jesus in his private off the cuff remarks with one or two of his own. He always found in Jesus that the private person squared with the public man. He had a chance to observe Jesus closely. Even the watching of Jesus' facial gestures to feel and to sense what they were registering. Did his face ever register disdain? Did he say that he loved others but somehow betray it in his emotions? Jesus lived before John in such a way that John could see how Jesus responded to pressure and tension. When Jesus ate, John was there. When Jesus looked at men and women John was there to see how he looked. He never found fear or scorn or sin in the look of Jesus towards someone else.

Jesus' eyes challenged the self-righteous but loved persons from all walks of life. John saw on occasion how Jesus' eyes welled with tears when he saw the adversities of others. So John's admiration for Jesus grew unbounded. You can read it in the gospels. It's immensely probing and exciting.

As they ate their last meal together and Jesus spoke about his death, John touched base with what he was feeling and what the Lord as feeling. He said that the Lord was distressed. Perhaps the Lord was hurting from the stubborn arguments of the disciples in the room over the question of greatness. Or the Lord was troubled over the unexplained departure of Judas or the Lord was troubled over this thing he was talking about, his hour has come. But whatever reason he was troubled, John reached out in that moment to the one person who had loved him most. More incredibly than his father or mother or his older brother James. Or any of his family or friends. He reached out and laid his head upon the heart of Jesus. He knew what it was to love and to be loved.

In the natural I have come in contact with this kind of love in a family way when I have crept into the room where my children slept and looked upon them. Or simply stood there and loved them with all my heart. I thought, as I was loving them that they were at that moment sleeping and unaware of the fact that they were even being loved yet they were loved. So unlike John we may have never experienced the physical presence of Jesus but I know for sure that there are moments when Jesus has looked at me and I have not been aware of it. But his love has reached out to me and he has prayed for me.

Believe in me and love me. The "whosoever" of the Lord's love John found not only included him but reached past him to others. John watched how unconditionally and how immediately Jesus loved people. It did not take a long time for Jesus to make up his mind about someone. He did not hold a person at arm's length distance and say, "I've got to wait to see if I can love you. You're not too pretty or handsome. Or I don't like your past. Or I haven't seen you before. So just stand there for a moment in the corner and let me look at you." John found rather a love, which was immediate and accepting and receiving.

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Jesus loved the rich young ruler spontaneously. And he loved him not because he was rich or because he was young or even because he was a ruler. He simply loved him because he loved him.

He definitely loved away the Samaritan woman's past and her prejudices.

He loved the important man Nicodemus. And again, not because Nicodemus was influential or a religious leader or had political clout or was wealthy. But he simply loved Nicodemus, again, for who he was.

He even loved the short crook who scampered up the sycamore tree to see him and favored the short crook by responding to his invitation to come to his house that day.

He loved the young woman who faced the lusty and scornful eyes of a self-righteous group who would have stoned her. He loved the untouchables. He ate with the outcast. He acted for people in their most profound moments of hurt and need. Even had heart for a young bride and groom at their wedding reception when their refreshments failed. And not waiting to do some splendid miracle upon the wine or grain he instead begins his miracle ministry by easing the embarrassment at a wedding reception.

Using the story of a lost sheep which is found by a shepherd, a coin which is found by a woman, a lost son found by a father, Jesus for a moment in his teaching opens the gates of heaven and allows us to peer inside to sense what is going on in heaven and the love of heaven and God the father toward us when any lost child of the heavenly Father is found by Jesus. As Jesus opened the gate to heaven in those stories he showed us the picture of angels singing and dancing and rejoicing over the lost that had been found. If you've ever wondered if Jesus loved you, simply look through the eyes of Jesus to the open gates of heaven and see the rejoicing that is occurring in the courtyard of glory for your sake and for mine.

Jesus' love never let up. The failure of others did not keep Jesus from loving even though we perhaps in our existence have been kept from loving because others have failed us. Betrayal could not keep Jesus from loving. He would not let the betrayal of one person turn him off from loving that person and loving all the rest. Pain and suffering could not keep him from loving. Even the cross could not keep him from loving. So that the epitome of the Lord's love is reflected on the cross where in his first words from the cross he is still reaching out in love for us and for others. For his enemies. Forgive. In a moment of time he loved a repentant criminal into paradise. And to his grieving mother Mary and to John he broke them away from attention to himself on the cross to concern for one another and told them in the days ahead they were to be with one another.

What became known as the church – you and me, this body the whole church of Jesus Christ, was born within the matrix of Calvary's love. Nothing less than the greatest love the world has ever known brought this community into existence. It was a great love, the love of Calvary, which called us to the heart of God and calls us to one another. And therefore it is as unthinkable to imagine the church as existing without love as it is to imagine the church existing without the savior.

So unbreakable are these definitions of love of the savior and love for the savior and the love of the church for one another that John says in his epistle "We love because he first loved us. If

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anyone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him that he who loves God should love his brother also.” A connection is made when you draw close to the cross of Jesus you must of necessity draw close to others.

John was called therefore not only into the love the savior but he was called within a company who were in fellowship to grow and to give and receive love for each other. This then brings to us all kinds of questions about our love or one another. Because there’s questions in the lives of married people that are here today causes you to ask within the depths of your heart do you really love your husband? Do you really love your wife? Or is your love one of appearance? Is your love one of duty? Is your love one of life is going in this direction and it’s too difficult to bail out now so we’ll just keep going. Or is it the kind of love, which John speaks of and experienced. From your heart do you love? The love of parents towards children and the love of children towards parents. Have you felt the love of the Lord? Love for your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Is the love simply one of perfunctionary nature or is it vital, probing, giving love. The Lord gave the eleventh commandment, added to the Decalogue when he said “A new commandment I give to you that you love one another. He speaks of a love of heart, a love in deed, a love in word.

You might ask how do you begin to love this way? How can I begin to love this way? I think the answer is to begin with the basic, to realize you are loved. It’d be hard for John to love the other disciples unless he knew that first of all he was loved and accepted by Jesus. Somehow when you catch the way Jesus loved it becomes possible to love others. And when you catch the fact that Jesus loves *you* as a person then you can give to someone else what you yourself have received.

In my own mind and heart I’ve gone back to the womb of my life and find that when my frame was being wrought in the wonder of creation the Lord was present. And the Lord loved me from the moment of my conception to the moment of my birth. He joyed with my parents when I took my first step. When I said my first word. I’m convinced that Jesus was there. That he was present. He loved me in the horrible ugliness of my adolescence. The terrible ungainly freckles, the blaws, the chipped tooth, the unwanted glasses. All of the things that made me feel that I’d been destined to be the most ugly person who ever walked the human race. I used to dream about winning Mr. Ugly contests. Somehow I know that Jesus loved me.

The day as a lonely young man I got on a Greyhound bus to travel 1200 miles to college I did not get on the bus alone. He was with me. He has wept over my sins. He has forgiven my sins. He has rejoiced in whatever attainments I have had. He has hungered for my fellowship. I know that I’m loved. And I know you are loved. Loved in a very special way.

I know that Jesus loves you so much. The only question I have in mind is do you know that he loves you that much? And have you opened your life to experience and begin growing in that love? Lovest thou me, he asked. Strikingly it is John, also that records that question of Jesus Lovest thou me? Is our love for him and our love for family and friends and others growing or do we find it slipping away. Lovest thou them? Jesus inquired. Lovest thou, me, asked Jesus. The answer can be affirmative. Then it can be in response “Love one another.”

Jesus found for John truth. John found in Jesus not only truth but also love. John would have missed both the truth and the love had he not acted in faith to follow Jesus. From the very first

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day of his walk and all the rest of his discipleship it was still a walk of faith so that if truth and love are going to be realized they can only be responded to when we are moving after him in faith. On that spring afternoon Jesus stood before the young man John and gave him the greatest invitation one can ever receive in life. Come and see.

And John in that moment was called upon to believe the word of a person he hardly knew. But although Jesus appeared before John and stood before him as one largely unknown there is something in Jesus that strikes a responsive cord of commitment and faith within the human heart. I know that something in Jesus is there. I know it by looking at John and the other disciples. I know it by looking at myself. I know it by sharing with other Christians. There is something in Jesus, which evokes from us a response that wants to get up and say, I will go. So what with what I'm doing now? I'll leave it behind to have the opportunity to follow Jesus. I will come. I'm convinced that the opportunity to follow Jesus is only stifled with the greatest amount of stifling you can bring to bear because the strongest pressure of life when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you is the response to follow Jesus.

No one commits himself to someone he doesn't trust. So from the first moment Jesus inspired faith and trust in John and he followed. As he began to follow, Jesus does not tell him much. In fact, Jesus never tells any disciple all at the beginning of the walk. John did not know what lay ahead. From his youthful vantagepoint on the Jordan River he did not see ahead, Calvary. Let alone see the Isle of Patmos on which he would end his life, that 4 by 8 miles expanse out on the Mediterranean. He had no knowledge of that, that day.

You have no knowledge where the trail is going to lead you on. But know this: he will lead you and he will never leave nor forsake you. Even at the beginning of John's walk with the Lord his conception of the Lord was extremely inadequate and incomplete. We falsely, I think, sometimes assume that when a person comes to Christ immediately as they are born again, God inserts all of the theology into their head. And he drops a full blown gift a theological textbook all of a sudden gets dropped in our head. We have a supernatural knowledge of God, Christ, angels, trinity, Satan, sin, security. You name it. But that's not the way it happens.

That's not the way it happened with John. He began following Jesus. As you follow Jesus you come to know him. As Jesus said, If anyone would know me, let him keep my commandments. Day by day he leads and guides.

In fact, when John began following Jesus he hadn't even heard Jesus teach yet. Jesus hadn't said a word. It'd been John the Baptist who had been doing all the talking. Jesus hadn't even done a miracle yet when John began to follow. Apparently when John was called, the Galilean didn't have any other disciples. John was the first of two that followed. What possible future could there be for John in taking out after a man who just so recently back in Nazareth had been a furniture builder and a house maker. And who had recently entered the crowded field of religion without even the advantage of a formal semester of ministerial training. His dad Zebedee back at home must have been doing cartwheels. There was something in Jesus that inspired trust in John's heart.

The psalmist put it together when he said "Deep calls unto deep." As the deeps in the moon causes the depths in the oceans producing tides. And as the deeps in vast distances calls to the depths in birds and fish and animals producing migration across trackless expanses. So the deep within the heart of Jesus calls within the deep within the heart of me and produces faith.

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Jesus calls and we answer. We come to Jesus in this manner of the deep in him calling to the deep within us. Evoking faith. We come in so many different ways. Some of us come to Jesus by raising a hand or walking down an aisle or silently sealing a commitment in our heart. But however we come, when we first come, it's true that we may not know a whole lot about the one we are committing our lives to. Or even what it will involve for us. But one thing is true that the Spirit of God has welled up within us the desire to follow Jesus. So we follow. We trust him with our sins. He forgives them and buries them. We trust him with our lives and he returns to us all things sufficient for this life and the life to come.

The one who follows the Lord will not lack in any good thing for the Lord gives to his children. John, when he followed with faith, it must not be thought that the faith that John had was the kind of placid faith. The kind of faith that never walked through trial or struggle or adversity. There were moments when his faith was tested with great fire. Every disciple since John has known the testing of faith. John's faith did not exempt him from the Lord's rebuke when John got vengeful towards inhospitable Samaritans and wanted to burn them out. His faith did not exempt him from the rebuke of the Lord when he got in a shoving match with other disciples about who is the greatest. Our faith doesn't exempt us from the rebuke of the Lord when we get out of line.

Jesus forces the roots of John's faith deeper by disappointing John's political concept of the Messiah and forcing John to come to an understanding of Jesus as the suffering servant. Just like Jesus sometimes forces the roots of our faith deeper by not appearing as our genie when we rub the magic bottle and conjure him up. We're trying to make him do something we want. He forces us deeper to another level of understanding.

John's faith knew the buffeting of total despair when he fled away from and even denies the Lord when he sought three years of his own life go up for nothing. So he thought on a Roman cross. All that he believed was shaken and the harsh reality of death simply knocked the wind out of the sails of his faith. There are few disciples who have not had this experience. Even after the resurrections there were moments when fiery darts sought penetration of John's faith. Within a decade after the resurrection, John's own brother James who was one of the inner circle of three was cruelly martyred by Herod Agrippa. Could John's faith survive the imponderable events, which God allowed, and to our human understanding makes no sense at all? Did John's understanding change? His death couldn't make any sense. Could his faith survive the imponderables?

One by one John had to reckon with the death of all the rest of twelve until he alone was left alive. He witnessed the Caesars smashing through the dreams and hopes of the church, snuffing out the lives of moms and dads and boys and girls. As an old man he was wrenched from his place of ministry and slapped down in exile on a 4 by 8 miles wasted stretch of land called the Isle of Patmos. Could his faith survive all these things? Had the Lord failed him? Was his faith a mirage? Had he followed Christ in vein? Every moment of trial brought to him these concerns and these questions.

But if we look at the genesis of John's faith we can understand how he was able to get through trial. Remember resurrection morning? Jesus had vanished from the tomb. Mary ran to tell Peter and John and John outran Peter to the sepulchre but while stooping at the entry to look in, Peter shot past him and ran into the tomb. John then entered and describes himself as seeing the

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linen clothes lying and the napkin which had been rolled around the head of Jesus not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped up in a place by itself. Peter saw the same material that John saw. But unlike Peter, John made immediate sense of the situation. He knew that the disciples hadn't stole the body. Option one was out. He knew that the Romans and the Jews hadn't taken the body because they could not have left it in this condition as though the body had vanished from their midst. There's only one conclusion left. It was the conclusion that Jesus had risen. So he stopped and he believed. And John becomes the first person in the whole world to believe in the resurrection of Jesus and he hadn't even yet seen Jesus. But he believed on the basis of good evidences, which led him in the right direction.

Thus John is able to say, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe," because he too had not seen but had believed.

His faith so characteristically expresses itself. He believes in the Lord when others may not have seen him present.

On the Lake of Galilee some days after the resurrection the disciples are out fishing. They fished all night and caught nothing. A man appeared on the shore a hundred yards away and called out, "Cast the net on the other side." They obeyed, caught a full draft of fish. No one had recognized the visage of Jesus; he was too far away. Nor did they recognize his voice. But when John saw the full catch through faith he made two and two fit together in a rational pattern and said, "It is the Lord!"

Continuing, John looked at life through the eyes of faith. He saw the Lord.

John at the end of his life is cut off from his fellow believers. He's at his post in exile. No doubt as he is in exile there are moments he longs to join the company of his beloved friends in the gospels. How he would love to worship with them on the Lord's day to sing with them, to pray with them, to read the word together, to expound the word. But these times were gone and as he sets in exile on the Isle of Patmos he takes up, as the Spirit anoints him, his pen to write. And he begins the last book in the Bible, the book of Revelation, by saying that he was in the spirit on the Lord's day.

Again he is showing faith. The natural would be a place where one would be in the doldrums. Where one would be commiserating over his losses. Where one would be fearful about the present and the future. Where one would be in despair wondering if it had all been in vein. But John is in the Spirit. And as he's in the Spirit he sees that the realm of the Caesar's is coming to an end because he, John, has stood in the empty tomb where Jesus has made the greatest appearance of life. He has come out and because he stood in the empty tomb he knew here was a day when all the world would see that Jesus empties all the graves. Jesus puts down all of those who have ruled by the force of material might and has not looked to him for strength and power.

So John writes. He does not write an eulogy or lament. He does not say it has been a waste and his life has been in vein. But in defiance of everything John sees Jesus high and lifted up resurrected, exalted. He sees that he has a friend in heaven.

Continuing, John experienced the faith, which saw beyond earth into heaven. Beyond the material into the spiritual. The death of his brother James, John had stood in the empty tomb and

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he knew that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. James simply went from Herod's hand to the right hand of Jesus. And anyone could take that kind of promotion.

He would see his brother again. The martyrs who gave their lives for the Lord. After all, all must die. What greater privilege could one have than to die for the Lord? Exile, only temporary. John saw a holy city coming down out of the heavens. No matter what happened all is well.

Jesus changed John's world. That day when he began to follow, his world began to change and it never was the same. And Jesus is apt to change your world and my world.

Does your world need changing? How do you relate to truth? Are you, like Pilot, who when Jesus declared "I am the truth," simply responded, "What is truth?" Pilot had come to believe that truth was unattainable. That no one could grab it. Do you feel that way about truth? Or have you embraced the truth, believing in your heart, confessing with your lips that in all the events and he circumstances of life Jesus Christ is the Lord. How do you relate to love? Do you realize, do you have an inkling of how deeply you are loved by God? Are you in touch with the Lord even toward you what he feels in this moment and from the security of his love? Is your love reaching out to others?

Are you a joy or a cross to others? In your life and walk with others are you building walls or are you building bridges? Are you tearing people down or are you building people up? Are you making people secure or are you making them insecure? Is your love going anywhere? Or is your life coming apart because it is lived without love? Are you betraying someone who thinks your love for them is secure? Are you losing your interest in life? Jesus is alive. And offers you live today.

How about faith? Have you come to know that faith in Jesus Christ is not some wild leap in the dark? Not some form of Russian roulette where you press the trigger and hope you get the right religion? And woe to you if you miss. Maybe the second one will turn out all right.

But it is not that kind of a thing at all. When we follow Jesus the questions of life are really simple. Do you really believe in your heart Jesus is risen from the grave? And has the enormity of Jesus' resurrection at all spilled out into practical application of your life. The nuts and bolts of life where we make the practical decisions. Is Jesus really risen? John is careful to note near the end of the gospel the Lord's blessing on all those who have believed. "Blessed," he says, "are those who have not seen me and yet believed."

If you come to the end of John's writing it's incredible to watch how life comes full circle. He started out responding to the word of Jesus: Come. When he himself pens the last words of the New Testament that word "Come" is still reverberating in his life. Only it has had now a larger scope and a more intense meaning. So at the end when John writes he says, "The Spirit and the bride say come. Let him who hears come. And let him who is thirsty come." It's the same invitation, which shows us that John was not a privileged character at all. What was given to him is given to all. Jesus stands before us today as he once stood before John and he says to us very plainly, What do you seek?

What are you seeking? Master we want to know more about you. Then come and see.

## **THE MAN WHO CHANGED MY WORLD**

There are times our heavenly Father when we look at life we may be guilty of only looking at the small slice of time we are currently in. But to look today at John you have caused us to see the broader sweep. The full size of life. It's dimensions and its end. We look back into John's life and see the small slice of time, which proved to be the turning point forever. He began to walk with you and came to know truth and love, and experience faith. We realize through the word's witness to us and through what the Spirit tells us within that the experience of John was not meant to be an unique event which someone else could not have. But it was meant for us as well. We too today have been bidden, Come and see. I pray today for the many young people that are in the service who are hearing very deeply the call that you have placed upon their lives, come and see, as they begin this school year there is so much ahead that they do not see. Well up, Lord, within them a response, which flows out to realize that living in your presence, is to find truth and love. No matter what age we are in life, Lord, we know that you call us to yourself. We've gone down other roads, tried other means. You've stood at every intersection of our life and every barrier that made us turn back. Your presence has been there. Always open to receive us. Always inviting, come and see. Lord Jesus, within our hearts let us respond to you. And believe you from a full heart and make confession with our lips Jesus is the Lord.