

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

by J.R. Miller

The sermon teaches us the importance of leaning on Jesus' bosom and growing intimate with Him, which transforms our character into the gentle beauty of holy love.

Scripture: Psalm 91:1-2, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 11:28-30, John 13:23, John 15:16, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 4:19, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Intimacy with Christ", "Trust in God's Love"

Description

J.R. Miller reflects on the profound intimacy between Jesus and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, emphasizing the importance of resting in Christ's love rather than relying on our own efforts. He illustrates how true faith involves leaning on Jesus' bosom, symbolizing trust and surrender during life's trials and uncertainties. Miller encourages believers to find peace and security in Christ's love, especially in dark times, and highlights that it is Christ's love for us that transforms our character and brings us closer to Him. He concludes by reminding us that there is always room in Christ's bosom for all who seek refuge and comfort.

Transcript

"One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to Him." John 13:23

One of the most tender pictures in the gospel, is that which shows us one of Christ's disciples leaning on the Master's bosom. No name is given. We are told that it was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." We know then, who it was. In all the Gospel written by John, he does not once mention his own name--but the book shines from beginning to end with the splendor of the person of Christ. He glorified the Master, and hid himself. While we insist on writing our own name on every little picture of Christ we paint, and projecting our own personality into all our Christian work, demanding recognition, honor, and credit for ourselves, we cannot worthily honor our Master. Like John, we should write gospels which shall show forth the glorious honor of Christ, His sweet beauty, His gentle love, in which we shall nowhere inscribe so much as our initials.

There is another thought here, with a lesson. This disciple, who nowhere wrote his own name on any page of his Gospel, spoke of himself again and again by the designation, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John did not say, "the disciple who loved Jesus." His hope did not lay in his love for Christ--but in Christ's love for him. This is the central principle of divine grace. We find it in such words as these, "Not that we loved God--but that He loved us." "We love Him--because He first loved us." "You have not chosen Me--but I

have chosen you." It is never our love for Christ that saves us--but always Christ's love for us.

In John leaning on Jesus' bosom, we have a type of all true Christian faith. Look at the little child lying on the mother's bosom. It has no fears, no anxieties, no questionings. It nestles in the place of love, feels the strong arm encircle it, and has not a care. Thus ought we to learn to lie in the bosom of Christ.

No lesson is taught in the Scriptures more repeatedly, than the duty and privilege of trusting in Christ. We are taught that we are taken care of in this world more constantly, and kept more securely, than the most favored child on earth can be taken care of, or kept, in the securest, most loving home. We are taught to be anxious for nothing. There are many needs and trials--but "your Father knows." There are sorrows and losses--but "all things work together for good." This great, wild, turbulent, wicked world, seems to be a perilous place for Christ's little ones to live in; but every one of them is kept and carried in Christ's bosom. It is Jesus Himself who tells us that the strongest and most honored angels are set to guard His children, and that they are always admitted to the presence of the Father in heaven. His words bring before us this picture beside each little one of Christ--is an angel guardianship which makes the feeblest of them all as safe, even in this world, as if they were already in heaven.

So in all this world's wild turbulence, amid its enmities, its temptations, its trials and sorrows, its wants and dangers, its strifes and conflicts--every child of God may be kept in perfect peace. Wherever he is, whatever his circumstances or his condition, he is really lying on the bosom of Jesus. We should learn not to be afraid in life's wildest storms. Though all earthly things are torn from our clasp, and all earthly refuges are swept away, leaving us in the midst of dangers unprotected, unsheltered--still God is our refuge, and still do we lie in the bosom of divine love. No earthly walls can ever make such a secure dwelling-place, as is the bosom of the Almighty.

When was it, that John leaned on the Master's bosom? It was not on one of the bright days of John's discipleship. Even then the picture would have been beautiful, teaching us its sweet lessons of love and communion. But it was not at any such time as this. It was on the last night of our Lord's life, a time of great darkness, of strange, bewildering fear, of sore alarm and danger. Never did deeper night hang around human hearts on earth, than hung that night about the hearts of Christ's friends. Yet where was John? Lying on the bosom of Jesus!

What is the lesson? There may come to any of us, amid the swift and sudden changes of time, an hour of darkness, of alarm, of sorrow. Where shall we then go? We cannot understand the meaning of the strange events that bring such desolation or such bewilderment; but for that very reason, the best thing we can do is to lie down on the bosom of Christ--and leave in His hands all the strange questions, all the perplexity. He knows, He understands. If we turn to Him in our times of darkness--we shall always find light, for it is never dark where He is. Even a strong human friend, is a refuge in time of trouble; much more, in the secret of the presence of Christ, shall we find peace in the time of earthly dismay.

Where was it that John leaned? It was on the bosom of Jesus. He did not merely put his hand into his Master's. The hand is the symbol of guidance, upholding, help. It is good to be held by the hand of the strong Son of God. John did not lean merely on the arm of Christ. The arm means strength, upbearing, protection, security. It is a blessed comfort to have the everlasting arm underneath us. But John leaned on the Lord's bosom. He lay close to His heart. The bosom is the place of shelter. It is also the place of love. The Good Shepherd carries the lambs in His bosom. It is a great comfort to have the power of Christ for our help, our security, our refuge; but it is infinitely better to have the love of Christ for our hiding-place, our

shelter. To lie on the bosom of Jesus--is to be wrapped in the precious folds of infinite love. A mother's bosom is for her child, the softest place in all this world; but the bosom of Jesus is infinitely softer and warmer.

What did John do? He leaned on Jesus' bosom. The word "leaned" is very suggestive. Perhaps we miss something of the full, rich meaning of our privilege, in this regard, as believers in Christ. We understand that we may cast our burdens on Christ, that the loads which are too heavy for us to carry--He will help us to carry. We speak of bearing Christ's yoke, and we like to think that He walks beside us and helps us, as our divine yoke-fellow. Then we go further, and think of Him bearing our sins. The load that would sink our souls to the depths of eternal despair--we may lay on Jesus, the Lamb of God,

But even this is not all that is implied in leaning upon Jesus' bosom. John left all his care in his Master's hands that night. The hopes that seemed now crushed, his bitter disappointment, he laid down in the bosom of heavenly love. But as we look at the picture, we see that the beloved disciple leaned his own weight upon Jesus; not only the burden of his sorrow, his perplexity, and his loss did he lay on Jesus but himself.

A friend was moving his library, and his little boy was helping him to carry his books upstairs. The child had gathered his arms full, and had gone off proudly with his load. Presently, however, the father heard a call for help. The little fellow had gotten half-way up the stairs, when the burden proved too heavy, and he sank down. He wanted his father to come and take part of the books. The father heard the call, and, coming up the stairs, he lifted and carried both the boy and his load.

Thus it is that Christ carries us and all our burdens. There is nothing in all our life, that He does not take up. When He becomes our friend--He takes our sins and puts them away. He takes our wicked heart and changes it. He takes our sinful life and restores it. He takes our mistakes and sins--and corrects them. He takes into His hand the guidance of our life, the ordering of our steps, the shaping of our circumstances, the ruling and overruling of the events of our days, our deliverance in temptation. When we give ourselves to Christ, we really have nothing whatever to do with our own life--but our simple duty, day by day, hour by hour is, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." This is our one duty. "And all these things shall be added unto you," is the divine part.

This picture suggests to us the secret of a beautiful life. Artists in their pictures paint John the most like Jesus of any of the apostles. There is no doubt that he was the most beloved of all--because he was the most loving of all. His Gospel and Epistles breathe the spirit of a most sweet and gentle character. Yet there are indications that it was not always so--that originally he was fiery, vehement, resentful. Once he desired to call down fire from heaven to burn up a village and destroy its inhabitants, because they had refused to entertain Jesus. This was not the spirit of love which we find in him later. He had to learn the lesson of love.

One compares the character of John in its mellow ripeness--to an ancient extinct volcano. Where once the crater yawned--there is now a verdurant, cup-like hollow in the mountain summit. Where once the fierce fire burned--lies a still, clear pool of water, looking up like an eye to the beautiful heavens above, its banks covered with sweet flowers. It is an apt parable of this man. Naturally and originally volcanic, capable of profoundest passion and daring, he is new-made by grace, until, in his old age, he stands out in calm grandeur of character, and depth and largeness of soul, with all the gentlenesses and graces of Christ adorning him a man.

What was it that wrought this transformation in John? What was it that subdued the spirit of resentment in him--into the gentleness of love? What was it that made the "son of thunder" into the apostle of Christly affectionateness? It was lying upon the Master's bosom, which did it! The lump of common clay lay on the perfumed rose, and the sweetness of the rose entered into it, permeating it with its own fragrance.

There is room on that same bosom of eternal love--for all who will claim the place. How can we find the place? We are in Christ's bosom--when we have a confiding trust in Him; when we believe in His love for us, and let it flow about us in all its tenderness, loving Him in return. We rest in that bosom--when we grow intimate with Jesus, cultivating close fellowship and companionship, forming with Him a real heart-to-heart friendship, until we know no other friend so well, and love no other friend so much. We may come into this holy privilege, living always near the heart of Christ. Then the effect on our life of such habitual reposing on Him--will be the transformation of our character into the gentle beauty of holy love. Lying on the bosom of Christ, we shall grow like Christ. His life and love shall flow into our heart and saturate all our being.

There is another look at this picture, which we must take before we turn away from it. This time it gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be. The ancient Jews called the home of the blessed dead, "Abraham's bosom." That was because Abraham was the father of the Jewish people, and the children were all gathered into the father's bosom. In a far sweeter, truer sense--may we speak of heaven as the bosom of Christ. It is the place of perfect communion. Nothing will ever separate the believer from his Savior in that home of glory.

We see, too, what death is to a Christian--only going up closer in the bosom in which he has lain here on earth. Should anyone be afraid to creep up into this gentle place? Stephen, dying, saw Jesus, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Paul said, "To me to die is gain." Dying is gain to a Christian, because it is departing to be with Christ. Let us not dread to leave this world, if we are indeed Christ's. It will be changing only dim faith--for blessed sight; the Friend whom having not seen we love, until face to face with Him forever.

There is room on that bosom for many more. It is never full, for the arms of Christ are stretched out to take in the whole world.

Christ's bosom is never full. There is room for the penitent, room for the wanderer who wants to return, room for the sorrowing who seek soothing and comfort, room for the old in their feebleness, room for the children--room for all.

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