

SERMON - FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE - 27 DECEMBER 2009
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

John 21:24 (KJV)

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

This is a rare occasion for this parish to be able to properly celebrate the feast day of our Patron Saint, Saint John. Normally, being so close to Christmas Day, we barely give St. John much of a recognition at all.

John, the author of the fourth Gospel, the three Epistles bearing his name and the book of Revelations, was born somewhere around the year 6 AD and died somewhere around the year 104 AD, the only one of the twelve to die of natural causes. He was the brother of Saint James the Greater. Together they were called "The Sons of Thunder" by Jesus because of their volatile temperaments.

He is sometimes referred to as Saint John the Divine due to his great theological insights.

John is also called the "Apostle of Love." As he said in 1 John 3:18 (KJV) *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Also admonishing us in 1 John 3:11 (KJV) *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

And again in 1 John 3:13-14 (KJV) *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. [14] We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

But let us especially listen to the words that he wrote in 1 John 4:7-12 (KJV) *Beloved,*

let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. [8] He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. [9] In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. [10] Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. [12] No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Saint Paul tells us that there is faith, hope and love and that love is what will remain after faith and hope are gone. 1 Cor. 13:8 (ESV) *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.*

And again, 1 Cor. 13:13 (ESV) *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

John then echoes these thoughts 1 John 4:17-19 (KJV) *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. [19] We love him, because he first loved us.*

In other words, love is what counts and we cannot live without love. God loves us. John quotes Jesus in that familiar passage John 3:16 (KJV) *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Our purpose in life is to love God with our total, entire being and to love each other. What we hear sometimes described as Charity is God's love that we reflect to others by our lives more than by our words.

I often think how God took those Apostles, four of whom were commercial fishermen,

and transformed them into true evangelists and witnesses, and am amazed, particularly in the case of John.

But then, doesn't he transform each one of us. Doesn't he take each one of us and change us when we allow Him to do it.

Once we meet Jesus, none of us is ever the same. Even if we reject Him, we still are changed.

I think about those words from Revelations that are a great summary of John's insight Rev. 1:4-6 (KJV) *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; [5] And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, [6] And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Listen especially to these words, *Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, [6] And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

It is only through Love that we are saved, God's love.

John's message.

Amen.

