



# Benefice of Atworth with Shaw and Whitley

## The Disciples of Jesus: John

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John 1:1-7

Mark 9:1-14

Abbreviations: Matthew (Mt); Mark (Mk); Luke (Lk); John (Jn)

### In essence:

- Who is this man, Jesus' disciple, called John, often referred to as the Apostle of Love? There are many traditions which have been depicted in art through the centuries (*paintings illustrating the sermon may be found online*):
  - As a young man, head bowed on his arm, as though resting in Jesus' presence, in submission and love at the Last Supper (*Valentine de Boulogne: St John and Jesus at the Last Supper*)
  - As writer, eyes gazing heavenward for inspiration – quill in hand; prolific author of 4 Books of the Bible (*Il Dominichino: St John the Evangelist*)
  - As the beloved disciple, standing at the foot of the cross ready and willing to embrace Jesus' mother as his own (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti: St John Comforting the Virgin at the Foot of the Cross*)
  - In later life as patriarch, founder of a community of disciples, servant, evangelist (*Piero della Francesca: St John the Evangelist*)
- Son to Zebedee and younger brother of James, John joins the family in a successful fishing business.
- John responds to God's powerful prompting to lay down his nets and, with his brother James, answers Jesus' compelling and irresistible calling (Mk 1:19-20).
- Like James and Peter, John was included in Jesus' inner circle, chosen to witness special events in Jesus' life and ministry, such as the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:1-14; Lk 9:28-36). Jesus trusts Peter, James and John to keep this amazing vision a secret.
- John is portrayed as somewhat arrogant, ambitious and argumentative. We see him admitting to chastising someone for daring to cast out demons in Jesus' name (Mk 9:38-41; Lk 9:49-50). John, together with James, assumes that being disciples gives them the power to rain fire on the Samaritans (Lk 9:51-56). They boldly approach Jesus trying to secure the top spot in Jesus' kingdom (Mt 20:21-28; Mk 10:35-45). They argue with their fellow disciples about who is the greatest (Mk 9:33-37; Lk 9:46-48) No wonder Jesus nicknamed them the Sons of Thunder! But Jesus never gives up on John, whose life is transformed through Jesus' redeeming love and guiding hand.
- Tradition identifies the disciple John as the author of John's Gospel, letters and Book of Revelation. Modern scholarship suggests that the Books may have been recorded by members of John's own community – from John's perspective. It is in John's Gospel that we find the seven 'I am' sayings by Jesus:
  - I am the bread of life (Jn 6:48)
  - I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life (Jn 8:12)
  - I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture (Jn 10:9)
  - I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11)
  - I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live (Jn 11:25)
  - I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn 14:6)
  - I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower (Jn 15:1)

These themes are woven together with the holy thread of love; encouraging words for the persecuted Christians of the time and for each one of us today.

***"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-5).***

### For Reflection:

1. What can we learn from John about being a disciple? What would your portrait look like?
2. What would be the hardest thing to give up, to answer Jesus' call?
3. Can you keep a secret?
4. You may like to spend a moment reflecting on Jesus' seven 'I am' statements – what do they mean to you?
5. How does it make you feel to know you are Jesus' beloved disciple?
6. Are you ready, willing and able to take Jesus' guiding hand and trust in his transforming love?