

WONDER WHAT THEY WERE?

A SERMON FOR EASTERTIDE  
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JOHN 20:19-31

John writes that Jesus performed many other signs in the sight of His disciples that are not recorded in this book. And so that elicits my question that is the title for this morning's sermon: Wonder what they were?

The miracles, the signs, the things that Jesus did during His short time of ministry on this earth (no more than three years) are incredible. If one reads the gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, one finds Him healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, freeing those paralyzed from the grip of their paralysis, allowing the lame not only to walk, but to run and jump.

And then He feeds the multitudes, as many as 5000 men and their accompanying women and children at one time.

In my view of John's gospel, it is the memoirs of the oldest living Apostle, dictated to a scribe, wonderful stories of the Christ, an oral history told to preserve the stories and memories of Jesus by the last of His associates. John was probably past ninety when this gospel was written. If the order of John's stories isn't the same as the other gospels, if John doesn't always remember, doesn't always get things in the right order, he can be forgiven. That doesn't mean the John's gospel isn't the inspired word of God: it was God that inspired John to utter the words, and the Holy Spirit that brought all things to John's memory.

John tells us stories that no one else does. John tells us stories that no one else could, because no one else but John was there. John alone tells us of the wedding at Cana in Galilee, where Jesus turned the water into wine. He alone tells of the raising of Lazarus, of the encounter between Mary Magdalene and the risen Lord, of the race to the empty tomb between that young, unnamed, beloved disciple that was himself. And John alone tells us my favorite fishing story, of the breakfast on the beach with the disciples after they had returned to Galilee.

Oh, there are some stories John doesn't tell us. He leaves Matthew and Luke to tell us of the birth of Jesus. And Luke tells us so many more parables. Luke tells us about the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son. The story of the two on the road to Emmaus is Luke's to tell, also.

But when John writes that there were many other things that Jesus did in the sight of His disciples, don't you wonder what they were?

Some of the writings that didn't make it into the Bible, what we call the pseudepigrapha, and include gospels of Thomas, Phillip, Barnabas, and even Judas, may list miracles that Jesus performed, signs and wonders that are not told in the Holy Bible but they truly are not worth mentioning.

Wonder what these things were, that John refers to but does not include in his gospel.

Were they miracles and signs so trivial that John didn't think them worth mentioning? Were they duplications or imitations of other stories that already appear in the gospel, and thus it would have been redundant and repetitive to include them?

Are they stories that if they had leaked out, might have led to persecution of the followers of Jesus?

We can never know.

But John does tell us two other things, which are important in our wondering, and in our understanding.

The first is this: In the last verse of John's Gospel, it is written: "There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose the world could not contain the books that would be written."

In his commentary on this verse, William Barclay wrote:

"In this last chapter, the writer of the Fourth Gospel has set before the church for whom he wrote certain great truths. He has reminded them of the reality of the Resurrection; he has reminded them of the universality of the church; he has reminded them that Peter and John are not competitors, in honour, but that Peter is the great shepherd and John the great witness. And now he comes to the end; and he comes to the end thinking once again of the splendour of Jesus Christ. Whatever we know of Christ, we have only grasped a fragment of Him. Whatever the wonders we have experienced, they are as nothing to the wonders which we will yet experience. Human categories are powerless to describe Christ, and human books are inadequate to hold Him. And so John ends with the innumerable triumphs, the inexhaustible power, and the limitless grace of Jesus Christ."

But wait! Before you sign off, and spend the rest of your days marveling and wondering at all that Jesus has done, for the world, for you personally, don't forget a little something that Jesus had to say to us before He left us.

Actually, He said it to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room, on the night when Judas betrayed Him, and when Peter denied Him, and all the rest ran away and left Him alone in the clutches of the soldiers and guards who came and took Him away like a common criminal.

This is what John records Jesus as saying in verse 12 of the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do."

Jesus charged us to do the works that He did, and to do even greater works in His name.

Wonder what they were?

Well, we know that Jesus taught and preached, and for nearly 2000 years, the Christian church has been teaching the Bible, and preaching the word of God.

We know that He healed the sick, and we Christians, through hospitals, through medical missionaries, have been healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, mobility to the lame, all in the name of Jesus.

We know that He fed the hungry. I don't have a clue how many people are fed by food pantries like ours every day, but I figured it out, and in a year's time we will feed more people through our food pantry than Jesus fed in His recorded feedings, and we're just one outpost of the multitude.

He raised the dead. Well, I don't know that we've done that. But we've brought some folks back from the brink of death. And we've taught people about eternal life, so that by knowing Jesus they won't every die.

Anything that you can name that Jesus did when He walked this earth; He has charged us to do, and to do even greater things than He did.

For some folks, Easter is the ending. But in truth, it is just the beginning. The beginning of the story of the Body of Christ in the world begins when they went to the tomb searching for the body that they could not find, for the Lord is risen. And in His rising is not only our hope, but our calling.

Let us pray.

Lord, there are so many who need to hear your word, who need to know the stories of your love, who and hungry, and thirsty not just for food and water, but for righteousness.

Help us to do the work that you did, and to do even the greater things, in your name Jesus we pray. Amen.