

Three days that changed everything

“I have seen” (John 1 v 29-36)

John the Baptist has always got more to teach us! In his Gospel the other John makes it clear from the word go that John the Baptist is entirely distinct from Jesus (see v 6 – 9). Before the important day when he saw Jesus, he had already made it crystal clear that his job was to point people to Jesus. Remember he said that he wasn't fit even to do the lowliest of tasks before the Lord Jesus. The gap, so large we can't imagine it (infinitely larger even than the gap between Roger Federer's tennis ability and mine!).

Then comes the day (v 29) when he saw Jesus coming towards him and straightaway, he identified Him as the One of whom he had been talking. He had come to see because the Holy Spirit had opened his eyes when he baptised Jesus and heard the voice from Heaven say, “This is my Son whom I love, with Him I am well pleased”. So it is that John is able to testify that Jesus is the Son of God and also the Lamb of God because that voice from Heaven pointed to him, as it should point us, to two crucial truths. One is that He was God the Son and the second is that He had come to be our Saviour. That is how His baptism makes sense. People were baptised for their sins and He had none, but He was baptised for our sins just as He would go on the die for our sins and be the sacrificial Lamb of God of whom John speaks, who would in His total innocence take our place.

It is noticeable that John appears to repeat himself on successive days. Maybe the first time his hearers didn't get it but next day they did. What an encouragement to us not to give up at the first failure to receive what we have to say about Jesus!

“Come and see” (John 1 v 37-51)

That next day then Andrew (and probably John the writer of the Gospel) paid proper attention to what John the Baptist said about Jesus. And so they turned, not to John, but to Jesus because John's job was done. His job was not to make a name for himself but to fade into the background in favour of Jesus (John 3 v 30). By now these two wanted to know more and Jesus wants them too as well. When they ask where He is staying, that is much more than a polite or inquisitive enquiry, it is showing a spiritual appetite to have their eyes opened so, “Come and see” means a lot more than come and just have a look round my lodgings! What a great day that must have been for them and how we could envy them.... except when we remember that we too can spend time with Jesus listening to Him through His written Word.

Andrew is a wonderful example to us because he didn't waste a moment in finding his brother and telling him about Jesus and bringing him to Jesus. What a wonderful pattern for us insofar as we are able to do that, not least with those closest to us. You never know what pointing one person to Jesus may do! Just look at what the Lord would do through Peter. But notice that it would take time for Peter's character to be moulded into one that could be used. In due course he would indeed be the Rock for Christ which is what his new name means.

We then come on to the third day and this time it is Jesus who finds Philip, seemingly before Philip is looking for Him. Not all of us come to Christ in the same way but for each of us it is true always that we find Him because He has first found us. So it is that Philip says to his friend Nathanael "we have found" and remember that he points back to the Old Testament which points forward to the One who has now come, Jesus of Nazareth, legally the son of Joseph but also God the Son. Nathanael speaks for all sceptics but what a great simple answer from Philip following what Jesus had said earlier (v 39). Our Lord gives Nathanael a wonderful accolade and he is completely disarmed and has a great insight into who Jesus is. But Jesus also tells him there is more to come and seems to be indicating that the time will come when Nathanael sees. That because of what He would do on the cross, He would open Heaven to all who would put their trust in Him.

Somebody has worked out that we are only told in John's Gospel of some twenty-one days of His ministry and here we have three of them so we can be sure that he thought they were very important! I pray that each of us may see with fresh clarity what John the Baptist saw and what those early friends of Jesus came to see because in these testing and frightening times the Lord Jesus is the only One to whom we can turn. Not all that much later on many of Jesus' followers turned back because they couldn't cope with His teaching and Jesus asked His twelve closest followers whether they were going to turn back and the same Peter, whom Andrew had brought to Jesus that day, said, "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". I pray that the reality of that wonderful truth will become ever more real to us because there is no darkness that can ever extinguish the Light that is Jesus Christ.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to!

With our love and prayers

Dave and Mary