

Today in our gospel we are meeting with John the Baptist asking a question that for any and many who have been in a relationship, we have come to a point where we have asked that question: is she the one or is he the one? John the Baptist sends his messengers to enquire of Jesus. He has heard that the Messiah is coming, he is here and has even baptised him. But now he has come to a position to question that is it you or are we waiting for another one. It is like when you are asking is this the man I am supposed to go to the vicar and say can we book a date for a wedding, or should I run for my life because it is not going to work out.

But Jesus answers John's question in the same way a lot of us have or those waiting for an answer have received it. It has never been about hearing that there was a poster on their forehead that said 'wife' or that she said I am the one you have been waiting for. It has been about the actions, how kind they were, how caring they were, how much of a gentleman they were. It is about the actions that result in feelings that let us know that we have found the one.

So Jesus says to them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: 'the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them' vs 4-5.

Jesus was doing something different but here is the problem, having heard that there is somebody who is coming for a long time, like after having so many failed relationships for so long a time, you come to a point where you start to expect something that will 'wow' you, something that will make you feel different, something that will stand out but Jesus comes in and seems to be doing the 'ordinary'.

At the time, there was a lot of injustices, a lot of people were being robbed of their money, a lot of people were living oppressed, so whenever they would read about the Messiah, they expected somebody who would come in these purple robes with a walk that says, 'I have arrived!'

Have you ever seen a man in a suit or a lady who feel they are well dressed, with hair done so well they flick it in that 'silly hair go back', men straightening their suit jacket in that way that says the main man has arrived. That's what they expected of Jesus, someone who comes with a sword and a wand, he strikes, and things happen, he flicks and Herod and all his people are thrown out there and things start to happen.

However, here is the Messiah who is not doing that. Yes, he had baptised him, read of him and knew so much and it says you are coming to change our world but no, you are not coming with thunder, you are not coming with lightning and yet he was doing big things in what seemed like 'tiny' movements. He was changing the course, he was turning the wind and Jesus says, 'blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me' vs 6.

My brothers and sisters, I want to highlight a truth that we have lived with and probably some of us we are still not yet embracing it which is the fact that when you are doing something there is bound to be those who do not understand and because they do not understand they choose to hate, because they do not understand, they choose to gossip about it, because they do not understand, they choose to have you persecuted.

They did not understand what Jesus was doing so much that even John had to ask the question probably a question that many had but here he is the one recorded asking. You are going to help, you are going to try and change the narrative at your work place, at home or even on the bus because you have seen something that is wrong and instead of that good thing being highlighted for the good thing that it is, you are going to be painted or spoken about but you are not to worry

because what you are doing is preparation, you are changing the wind and the course because one day there is going to be a time like where we are now where we are saying Jesus changed a lot of things for us.

You are going to be that person. It might not be a grand thing but it's not always about the grand things. Sometimes it is those little acts of random kindness because little things make big things. It is that kind word as a teacher that you say to the little boy who is struggling with algebra that will encourage him to keep trying and 20 or 30 years later, he becomes a heart surgeon. To a parent and guardian, it is that gentle yet firm word that you say to your child when you see him trying to cheat his brother that will put him back on the right course for an honest Prime minister or king when he is an adult.

It is those things that seem small that are actually big because they change the course before we ruin it. It is difficult to try and make changes when we have set a precedence of how things happen. There is that saying, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. I want to think that when John the Baptist was going to preach, and he seemed to be saying really mean things it's because those leaders had lacked somebody who had the confidence when they were younger, or they were starting to lose their ways to say that is not right. There had been a precedence of saying the Pharisees and Sadducees were ok in doing what they were doing at the expense of the people, and nobody is going to stand up and challenge it.

So when we meet John the Baptist that for whom we are remembering and we are lighting a candle for today, he is having spoken against those people and Jesus is asking, what did you go to the wilderness to see? It had been John who had chosen not to live the high life but instead live in the wilderness eating wild locust and honey. It was John who was not wearing robes and clothes as we know them but instead was choosing to wear just the bare minimum. But his words, his teachings as much as they can be seen as rude had a purpose. He had come to prepare the way, he had come to start the work and so Jesus asks, what did you go into the wilderness to see?

My brothers and sister, we are living in a world right now where those who have power use that power to their advantage only. They do not care or think of those they have been put to lead. I come from Africa where actually speaking against the person who is in power can result in your family going to a funeral three days later because you disappear.

But that does not mean we are supposed to promote evil or just sit quiet while we see people struggling, suffering, homeless, money being misused. Instead of money being used to help the needy, it is being used to start wars. People are building mansions and having properties in 7 or 8 different countries and yet as a leader you have a country that has got activist fighting just so that nobody sleeps on the streets when it is snowing outside. That is what John came to say no to, I will not sit and accept this. I will speak truth to power.

My brothers we are being encouraged to stand up, to do our part, to help even if it means just speaking out that the boys that are upstairs on the bus are doing something that is not nice to the girl sitting in front of them, can you do something about it please. It means there is going to be a girl who will say, I do not know who it was but there was somebody who made sure that I do not leave the bus traumatised.

Sometimes it is not about the clothes that we wear but how much we can do with just the little we have. It is not about the money we have in our accounts but how much we can use our voices to make a difference.

For them, for John, what mattered was making a change. It was not just for him but for the whole nation at the time. John had run his course. He knew that death was coming because up to this point John had been speaking out which had resulted in Herod putting him in prison because of the corruption in which he was living in. so john knows my days are numbered.

He is wanting to make sure that even though my days are numbered, there is somebody out there who is going to continue the work that he had started, who is going to speak and fight for those who are powerless. So, John is asking so he has confirmation that even when he is no longer there, he has peace of mind in knowing that the Messiah, the one who is going to make a difference for all these people is doing what he has to do.

Maybe for us the responsibility is in exactly that, trying to find out who is going to be able to pick up the button and keep the race going. Maybe for some of us, it is in making the preparations so that even though the person is not there, whoever is going to come into that space will have the guidance, the know-how on how we keep those who are vulnerable, marginalised protected, feel like they matter, they are loved regardless of where they find themselves.

My brothers and sisters, just as John asked that question, let us ask ourselves that same question that, as a Christian where I am right now, am I the one? The one who is going to choose better, who is going to make a difference so that someone else will remember.

Revelations tells us that those who do good, even though they die, their good deeds follow them. Its those times when granny is gone but we can all say, she used to do this good thing or when we can spot that person in the family who is like granny and she or he does what granny used to do. They have that heart of checking on every single person regardless of what is going on.

Are you the one?