

Journeying with John: Chapter 1
Who is this Jesus?

John 1:1-17

John is starting to reflect on 60 years of trying to follow Jesus: in this first chapter he wants us to know who Jesus is and so gives Him seven relevant titles:

1. He is the Silence Breaker (the Word) v1-3, 14

Here is a God who speaks and who breaks the silence we so often imprison ourselves in. The reality of the Church is that individually as Christians and corporately as Church we are lost for words and have nothing to say to a waiting and a watching world. The reality in the World is that communication has all but broken down and the awkward stony silence that follows serves only to make things worse. Into such silence God speaks and it happens (*Genesis: the sequel*). The clear answer from John is that Jesus is the silence breaker: for 'In the beginning was the Word'. This underlines the vital importance of waiting upon God: of this becoming life style rather than emergency last chance saloon. Our desire to hear God through Jesus clearly will depend on our relationship with Him and our faith in Him. Only when we realise that He alone can not only break the silence but also put flesh upon His words and promises will we be true to the confession of faith we make and the declarations of loyalty we aspire to. St Andrews needs to become a congregation where God speaks clearly and as a normal experience to us and through us to Canterbury. Only then will we be worthy of a hearing from an unbelieving generation. Jesus is the Silence Breaker: so walk and talk with a God who speaks today loud and clear.

2. He is the Dark Destroyer (the Light) v5, 9

Here is a God who destroys darkness with His unquenchable light: here is the answer as to how to deal with the darkness of this present world, and there's plenty about: whether in Newtown, Conneticut or in the continuing horror of Afghanistan, or dare I say it, the torment of hungry families

even in Canterbury. Proverbs 4:19 says: 'But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness...' Did you know that if you light a match on a clear night it can be seen 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ miles away and a light bulb 10 miles? My simple non-scientific mind thinks that darkness only exists where there is no light: so here's your opportunity: ally with the Light of the World (8:36) says John or to put it candidly after an ardent seeker called Nicodemus comes in darkness to find the light: Choose Light (3:19). And you will have a distinct advantage should you make that choice: for 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it' (v5). John will go on in his Gospel to tell us that the darkness of death, suffering and sin has been overcome once and for all in and through the Cross of Christ. So Jesus is the Dark Destroyer and with Him and through His Church we can begin to disperse the darkness and liberate those who have known nothing other than darkness. One of my most used prayers is when I speak directly to the Darkness (however it is manifesting itself): and say that I beg to differ in Jesus' Name. So is that just words or more? Answer: its much more for it says to the Enemy of my Soul that notice has been served on him and his hordes, that the Light of Christ has come and soon will destroy his dreadful deeds and liberate precious souls into the Kingdom of Light, the Kingdom of our God. So let St Andrews become known as a congregation that challenges the darkness in Jesus' name!

3. He is the Family Maker (the Son of God) v12, 49

He is a God who brings people together in Committed Relationships: if we recognise who He is, receive Him into our lives, then John tells us that "He will give us the right to become His children". Eden Restored! We are back in the Family of God: He is the Family Maker! The one who is a SON making sons and daughters, the one who has a FATHER sharing that father with us all, for "God has set the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6). But this is no enclosed and protected nuclear family, its family a la Family of God. It sends a message that

we belong to a world where few feel they belong anymore, it encapsulates an understanding that God has just one family, the Church, and any man-made division within that family must fall, and finally it sends a message of a conscious choice of the Father to adopt you and me and every other believer into His family: wow!

So to humble shepherds it not 'a saviour born to the world' it's 'a saviour born to you!' Always personal, always relational, always for you and me to choose to receive the Family in every respect and so no longer to be an orphan (14:18). So to a world where the majority seem to have given up on Family let St Andrews become a beacon of hope standing up for heterosexual marriage, family life, quality care of elderly and single people, for the Family Christ makes demands nothing less than our best in this area.

4. He is the Sin Bearer (the Lamb of God) v29-36

He is a God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son to restore for all eternity that unique relationship: our whole Bibles resounds with Isaac's question: Where is the lamb? And Abraham's answer: God himself will provide a lamb? (Genesis 22:7/8). So John the Baptist responds to the Isaac question and affirms but develops the Abraham answer as he introduces Jesus (there was no other good enough) with the words: Look the Lamb of God who takes away the Sin of the World. Yes the Sin of the World is what he bore: sometimes we Christians arrogantly seem to affirm that He died only for the Sin of the Church (a big enough job) and put two thirds of the world outside the orbit of His Love but that is just not so. Jesus bore the sin of my Muslim friend, my agnostic work colleague, my humanistic arrogant neighbour, yes even the Al Quieda operative intend on harming many: if only they might know it, if only I might have the opportunity to tell them! You see this perfect lamb was directed by the Great Shepherd of the Sheep totally: and thank God not by His church! People today need the weight of their guilt lifted not added to: we need to

be a forgiving grace filled people. St Andrews needs to be a place where mercy triumphs over judgement, and where the edges of our fellowship and family are ever ragged as was the circle of Jesus, the Sin Bearer.

5. He is the Promise Keeper (the Messiah) v44, 45

Here is a God who not only speaks but also keeps His word! 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are all 'yes' in Christ' (2 Corinthians 1:20). Christians 'who through faith gain what God has promised' (Hebrews 11:33) are a powerful force for God and for good in our world. Mary stood on the sure ground of faith and believed the message of God: may it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38) and the rest as they say is history! The Bible is packed full of the promises of God and we need to choose to believe them rather than walk in unbelief. Many are conditional: delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4). In a World of broken promises St Andrews needs to be a congregation that keeps its word: what word is that you ask? To be at the heart of transforming this city and the whole community of Canterbury whatever it costs and however long it takes! The Promise Keeper will provide for His Promise deliverers!

6. He is the Glory Restorer (the King of Israel) v 49

The Father through the Son and in the Power of the Spirit has but one purpose to restore His creation as it was in the Beginning: He is a God who deeply desires that His Glory be restored. 1. to the Nation: through obedience (and until our Nation once again honours Christ this will not happen) 2. to the Church: When He Returns (we long for that day) and 3. to every individual: by the Holy Spirit (this is where you and I can make a start and influence and hasten the other two). John comments (v14): 'we have seen His glory' implicitly suggesting that Glory being restored 'felt and seen' is the norm for God's restored Family, His Church. For what follows is also the norm for the seventh and final title John tells us:

7. He is the Heaven Opener (the Son of Man) v51

Here is a God who not only wants to transform earth but also is prepared to open heaven to us: John knew that 'his citizenship was in heaven' (Philippians 3:20). And choose to live in that reality of faith. Thus he moved in a dimension of revelation and blessing only hinted at in the Book of Revelation. Thus he choose to believe that it was for all time: the Year of the Lord's Favour. This is the normal Christian Life and anything less than that we are missing out! This is the floodgates of heaven being opened through obedience (mentioned in Malachi 3:10). It means that you will always feel out of place on earth: aliens and strangers in the land (1 Peter 2:11) for the reality is that 'you do not belong to the world' as John comments in 15:18/19. Heaven open over Canterbury: it can and will happen when faith filled believers realise fully who Jesus is, burn their worldly boats, and follow Him. How Canterbury needs to see such a church.

So today we are thrilled that Johanna & Judy are making such a choice and journeying with John towards becoming the women of God He intends them to be.

Pastor David

December 23rd 2012