

Reflection Sunday 13th December

John 1:6-8, 19-28

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

"Who are you?" was the question asked of John the Baptist. After his answer was the supplementary, "What do you say about yourself?"

On probably every quiz programme on TV, and many others beside, people are asked who they are and what they do.

Who are you? How do you define yourself? Is it name, location, occupation, relationship status and interests in that order?

Are you a Methodist and a Christian, or a Christian and a Methodist? – Other denominations are allowed to answer the question in their own way.

We may answer the question of our identity in one way but how do others see us?

Some when they saw John the Baptist thought he was "the Light", "the Messiah." He had to make it clear to those around that he was not. Even years later when John the Gospel writer was putting "pen to paper" he had to make it clear as to the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus. There were still those who followed the Baptist and not the true Messiah despite the efforts of John the Baptist to point away from himself to Jesus.

We have many in our world who want to draw attention to them and so to become popular figures in their own right; this can happen within the life of the Church. We need to follow the example of John the Baptist and point people in the right direction, that of following Jesus not self or just joining our particular church congregation.

Self-identity can be very important; knowing who we are in an environment helps us feel comfortable and content. When children move from primary education into secondary there can be difficult times as they seek to find their identity and position in a new community.

The same is true in many fields of life. In Christ we have an identity that is much more important than any earthly identity. John 3:3 "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power.....took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel round his waist." He then began to wash the disciples feet.

Our identity in Christ as redeemed children of God, citizens of God's Kingdom is more important than how we are seen and treated by other people; yes it is good to be liked but it is more important that people know the love of Jesus demonstrated by our words, deeds and actions.

Who are you? How do you define yourself?