

Devotional Blog

Sunday 13th. December

A few years back there was a small café in Church Road, Teddington that during the day served traditional English breakfasts and fry-ups. Yet in the evening it offered marvellous Turkish dishes along with delicious balloon bread.

Because the café was tucked away from the main shops it often suffered from being out of the way. In order to aid its visibility and trade the owner would employ someone to stand opposite to Tesco holding an eight-foot pole with a sign displaying the café name and the direction in which to find it.

Now, standing outside simply holding the sign wasn't the greatest job but it was important for getting the café and its whereabouts better known.

Pointing the way is a key role in the Gospels. When we start to read John's Gospel we are swiftly introduced (John 1: 6-8) to a man who undertook this key role. It's not Jesus. It is, in fact, John the Baptist, who should perhaps be called John the Pointer!

Over the years paintings of John the Baptist have often had him pointing to Jesus. There's a famous one by the Spanish painter Murillo, but if you put "Images of John the Baptist pointing at Jesus" into your search engine you will find dozens of them.

John's Gospel tells of the occasion when the religious leaders in Jerusalem sent a deputation to out check out John the Baptist (John 1:19-28). This group of Priests and Levities wanted to know exactly who he was and what were his credentials. Could John be the Messiah, or the returning Elijah or a great Prophet?

The answer to all the questions was No! He's not!

John uses a quote from the book of Isaiah, which they instantly recognised, to tell them that he was the voice crying out in the wilderness, the one who is preparing the way for the Lord.

Then, he really shocks them. He tells them that the Messiah is alive and living among them. Imagine the impact that had when they got back to the Temple and told the top leaders.

Despite the fact that John the Baptist came to a sticky end, each one of us is called to take up the role of pointing to Jesus. We can't leave this task just to our religious leaders. It is vital that we play our part.

Pointing the way may seem easy but you do need to have certain essential bits of knowledge to do it well. You need to understand who you are pointing to, and the correct direction to point.

You probably won't need to wear funny clothes or eat honeyed locusts, but your message is exactly the same as John the Baptist. Jesus is here; right with us now! If you have said "Yes Jesus, come into my life, Lord", he is present within you.

So where do we point to show his presence?

He's in the hearts of believers, working with them and through them. Think of all the challenges in your life: he's with you in all of them.

Christ's Holy Spirit also works collectively. It works through churches and faith groups. When we pray, when we worship, when we study the Bible, he's there. He's in our Christian outreach, in our fight for justice, in our support for the oppressed and marginalised.

And Jesus is here for sharing!

Look at our world, feel its pain and brokenness; yet rejoice in the love, forgiveness, and salvation that Jesus brings.

When you are pointing to Christ you probably won't get a deputation from the authorities to check out who you are pointing out. But you will get noticed. Your Christian values and beliefs send out an essential sign exposing God's love. Yes, of course, you'll get things wrong, plenty of times, but your persistence and patience, empowered by the Holy Spirit will ensure that your life points to Jesus.

So, the next time you see someone standing in the street with a sign pointing to a local shop or café; remember, pointing and telling is your job too!

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