

John 1:6-8,19-28

How John responds to searching questions

Religious leaders are dispatched to question John the Baptist as to his identity, wondering if he might be the Messiah. John repeatedly answers in the negative, but leaves them with an intriguing possibility that the Messiah is among them – but they don't realise it yet.



REFLECT

John called people to repent – to change their behaviour and follow God. Think about ways you feel you may have turned away from God. Scrunch up a piece of paper that represents those thoughts and actions and place it under the spotlight of the desk lamp, thinking about how God's light shines on us. Now retrieve the balled-up paper and open it out. The prophet Isaiah said, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' Smooth out the creases as a sign of repentance.



Play the game '20 questions' in which people must guess an object or person by asking up to 20 questions to which the only permitted answers are 'yes' or 'no'. An initial clue may be given, saying whether the answer is animal, vegetable or mineral. What questions would you have liked to have asked John the Baptist, if you had been there on the banks of the river Jordan?

LISTEN



Listen to 'Light of the World', Caleb and Kelsey, Christmas worship. <https://open.spotify.com/track/7oG8H4ixckz8QGUiH2omo8?si=44e00434c746456f>
What would be your song for this Christmas?

Bible notes



The lectionary's choice of verses for this reading shines a spotlight fully on John the Baptist. In the first three short verses (vv.6-8), we learn four things about John: that he was 'sent from God'; that he 'came...to testify to the light'; that he came to enable others to believe; and, that he is not to be confused with Jesus – who is the light of the world. Then, just in case we didn't quite get it, this is repeated in verses 19-28, but at greater length and in a more dramatic fashion. Here the priests, Levites and Pharisees ask questions on our behalf. But note also that, in his answers, John cites Isaiah. This shines a light on the way that John is telling them that the Scriptures they already know are about to be fulfilled. One of the key tests for true faith and Christian ministry is that we don't become confused about who we are. John knows who he is, enabling him to answer the questions posed. He stands in the great prophetic line that stretches through the Old Testament. John is not the Messiah, he is simply (!) a herald of what is to come.

First impressions

- What is going on in this image?
- How might you respond to searching questions about Jesus?
- What questions would you like to ask?



A prayer

May we find in God the Creator
the light of purpose;
in Jesus, His Son,
the light of truth;
and in the Holy Spirit
the light of wisdom.
Amen.



Light the first three candles on your Advent wreath. The third may remind us of **joy** – the joy of the shepherds. Pray this Advent prayer written by Henri Nouwen.
Lord Jesus, Master of both light and darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparation for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear Your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of Your Kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your presence.
We are Your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light.
To You, we say, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' Amen.