

## Introduction

I wonder if anyone recognises this lady from the news this week.....

Her name is Clare Hollingworth, she died earlier this week at the age of 105.

Clare Hollingworth was a British war correspondent for the Daily Telegraph in 1939 when she was the first journalist to break the momentous news of the start of World War 2 and the beginning of Germany's invasion of Poland.

When she phoned the secretary at the British Embassy in Warsaw with the news he didn't believe her until she held the phone out of the window to let him hear the advancing tanks.

It was the beginning of a terrible series of events and in that moment, she was the one to notice and the one to spread the word.

She was there in the right place, she could see what was happening and she could give her report.

Her testimony was true.

Now this morning in our passage the circumstances are obviously totally different, this isn't the horrible news of a war. But the greatest events in the history of the world are progressing and Jesus is ready to begin his ministry.

His public ministry starts right here.

This is Good News of the highest order but our passage still tells of John the Baptist being there at the beginning and being the first to realise and share what is going on. It's not quite a diary or a news report but it is John the Baptist's testimony.

He is there at the appointed time,  
understanding the events that are unfolding before him a  
and he too offers his testimony

Last week Jim was reminding us of our identity, that we are uniquely and wonderfully made and that we are children of God, loved and precious. Keep that at the back of your mind as this week we look more at Jesus identity because who Jesus identity demonstrates that love for you.

So John's testimony, v29-34

## John's Testimony

This would appear to be the day after the baptism of Jesus, John has previously alluded to Jesus status when he talks of one whose sandals he is not fit to untie but now he boldly announces exactly who Jesus is.

John's testimony is clear, this has been revealed to him and now he announces it publicly. In Chapter 5 Jesus says 'John was a lamp that burned and gave light' this was his role and his calling.

Looking at John's testimony about Jesus we have just a few small phrases but he speaks five huge truths about Jesus that are worth unpacking for a moment.

1. Jesus is eternal, John says that Jesus was before him. In any natural sense we know that John was born before Jesus. But what he is expressing here is Jesus eternal nature.  
Yes there was a specific time in history that Jesus became man but that was not the start of his existence.  
Jesus has always been and will always be.  
He is outside of time and earlier in chapter 1 we read "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." The creation of the world was through him.  
We need to hold in balance Jesus divine and human nature.
2. Jesus is the one on whom the holy spirit descends and remains. This is how John the Baptist identified Jesus. He says 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.  
John would not have known him except for the proof of the Holy Spirit  
In the Old Testament the spirit was with different people for a time but with Jesus the Spirit remains with him.  
He is special and the Holy Spirit is the sign for John.
3. Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit -  
This will be one of Jesus key tasks,  
to bring the Holy Spirit.  
After his death and resurrection he appears to the disciples and gives the Holy Spirit, a helper to be with Christians always.
4. Jesus is the Son of God v34 ' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God. John wastes no time in declaring exactly who Jesus is. There's no speculation or ambiguity. John publicly declares Jesus is the son of God.  
A bold claim and no doubt the sort of claim that help land John in King Herod's

prison.

5. Finally John describes Jesus as the Lamb of God, 'Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' at first glance that name for Jesus – 'lamb of God' might be a little strange but the reference goes back to the Old Testament and the Exodus.

The people of God were held captive in Egypt and God sent various plagues to persuade Pharaoh to release them.

Finally the Passover in Exodus 12 was where the sacrifice of a lamb protected the household's that followed God. The sacrifice of the lamb was to pay or atone for sin. Now Jesus would be the lamb that would atone once and for all the sin of the world. The Passover lamb was something for the nation of Israel alone but John says Jesus takes away the **sin of the world**.

His mission is much broader than just the people of Israel. Jesus came to live, to die and to rise again as the ultimate sacrificial lamb to pay for the sins of the world.

There is John's testimony, it's a pretty impressive list of news about Jesus. First on the scene, this is John's report and his testimony is true.

Then in the second half of our gospel reading we see how people begin to respond to the news and the first disciples follow Jesus. They can't have grasped the full truth of these points in one day, I'm not sure we even have now but it was enough for them to know Jesus was something special.

### First Disciples

Another day has passed and once again John sees Jesus and declares 'Look, the Lamb of God'. John is effectively telling his own disciples that it's time to move on, it's time to leave him and follow the real thing.

This has been John's mission – to prepare the way for Jesus and then step out of the lime light.

And so they do, they follow Jesus and Jesus turns to them and says 'What do you want?' or 'What are you looking for?'

Like the in all age diary account I'm sure at this stage they had very little idea of quite how to answer that question but they came with their curiosity and said 'where are you staying?'

I feel it's a little like how if you saw someone really famous you might blurt out something a bit strange just to get into conversation with them or you might be a little tongue tied!

The disciples are curious and they want to engage Jesus in some way.

And Jesus response to their question is the wonderfully simple

### **'Come and See'**

And so they go with him and not just to have a quick conversation but they spend the day with Jesus and everything begins to change for them too.

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him "we have found the Messiah" - we've found the one we've been waiting, the one that will give us hope, the one that will save us.

Then like all encounters with Jesus they can't stay the same, their lives are transformed. Jesus looks at Simon and gives him a new name.

Both Cephas in Aramaic and Peter in Greek mean Rock. From that first encounter Peter's future is changed even if some of his mistakes in the Gospel's don't always make it seem like he is a rock.

it makes me think back to the Psalm that we also read....Maybe it could be describing Peter

I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he turned to me and heard my cry.  
<sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm place to stand.  
<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear  
and put their trust in the LORD.<sup>1</sup>

Maybe it could describe some of us, maybe part of it is how you feel.

The Psalms are never shy about expressing the difficult parts of life, the disappointments, the trials but God can give us a firm place to stand and help us to look forward to new things.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version—Anglicised*. (1984). (electronic edition., Ps 40:1–3). London: Hodder & Stoughton.

## Conclusion

I wonder if you do feel like the writer of the psalms  
or like the disciples you have any questions for Jesus,  
anything you would want to ask him,  
anything you want to know.

Imagine yourself there. As we get John's 'first on the scene' testimony.

As he declares that  
Jesus is the Lamb of God,  
the eternal Son of God,  
the one on whom the Holy Spirit remains.

Would that leave you interested in following Jesus like the disciples?  
Would it leave you with any questions for Jesus?  
When Jesus says 'What do you want?' how would you reply.

Perhaps

Jesus can you help me?  
Jesus, I'm in the mud and the mire and I can't get out.  
Jesus, I'm looking for peace  
Jesus, I'm need to know I'm loved  
Jesus are you real?

We can ask our questions and Jesus says

**'Come and see'**,  
come a little closer,  
go a little deeper,  
follow me and you will find your answers.

When we begin to search for Jesus we realise like in the passage that he is already looking  
for us. Each of us can follow Jesus in a way that means we will never be the same.

We take John's grand statements, the truths of the faith, academically we could call it  
theology and that head knowledge is also joined with our heart knowledge, in a decision to  
follow Jesus, to come to him and ask for help.

**Come and see** Jesus says.

Maybe that is an invitation for you this morning?

And once you come and see there is also another element that made part of Andrew's  
response and we might call that 'Go and Tell'.

Andrew met with Jesus, spent the day with him and then v41 'the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him about Jesus. When he had discovered these amazing truths about Jesus he didn't want to keep it to himself.

So perhaps for us it's also time to Go and Tell.

Maybe there is a balance to be found in terms of being and doing.

Is there space for you to 'come and see' to spend time with Jesus but also to 'Go and tell' to let other people know about Jesus.

Maybe to 'Come and see' you could

- Have a quiet time with God at the beginning or end of each
- Or take a trip to a park or a quiet space for peace and reflection
- meet with a couple of friends to pray

Maybe to 'Go and tell' you could:

- invite a friend to church
- speaking out to colleagues, friends or through social media about injustices you are witness to.
- share your ideas about how the Jesus makes a difference to your life with your family and friends.

John the Baptist has testified to some incredible truths about Jesus and people have begun to come and see

Have a think for a moment about how you would respond to this. Jesus said we must become like little children to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps we need to allow ourselves to be led to come and see,  
to be willing to ask questions,  
to seek answers,  
to follow Jesus

And then like the disciples we will be moved to 'Go and tell' just who Jesus is.