

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

MAKING PRESENTS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Reflecting on the Gospel

John the Baptist (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

John the Baptist holds a prominent place in the season of Advent since he is seen as the forerunner who prepares the way for Jesus. In John's Gospel the Baptist is called 'a witness testifying to the light'. John's Gospel is keen to emphasise that the Baptist comes only as a forerunner whose job is to direct attention away from himself and toward the one who comes after him. This was John's present to Jesus, as he stepped into the background to bring Jesus into the foreground.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *making presents*.

Extracts from the Gospel passage (John 6-8, 19-20)

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
He came as a witness to testify for the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He himself was not the light,
but he came to testify to the light.
This is the testimony given by John
when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem
to ask him, 'Who are you?'
He confessed and did not deny it,
but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.'

Gospel prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
John the Baptist prepared for your coming.
Prepare our hearts to hear John's message,
so we are ready to welcome your birth
on Christmas Day;
for you are our God.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

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

The Testimony of John the Baptist

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said,

'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord' ',
as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME AT HOME

Reflecting and meditating

Reflect on how John's Gospel introduces John the Baptist (John, 1, 6- 8, 19-28):

- what details in the passage catch your attention?
- what big ideas does the passage spark in your mind?
- what most touches your heart in the passage?
- what most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage?

Thinking and talking

- how do you read the emphasis of John's Gospel on John as a witness?
- how do you read John's emphatic denial 'I am not the Messiah'?
- how do you understand the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah?
- how do you understand the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus?
- what can we make of this teaching for today?

Using your Bible

Explore the importance of light in John's Gospel:

- John 8: 12
- John 9: 5

Explore passages in the Old Testament that shape the image of light:

- Psalm 27: 1
- Isaiah 49: 6
- Isaiah 60: 1-3

Exploring online

- explore images of John the Baptist and Jesus
- explore making presents for Christmas
- explore why presents are given at Christmas

Drawing on experience

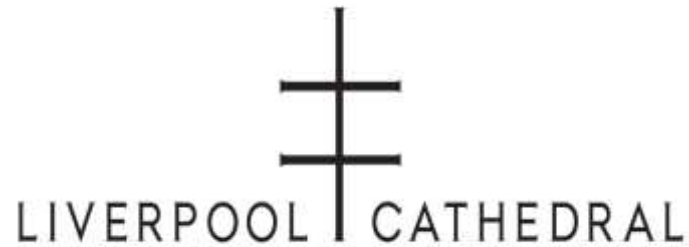
- reflect on your experience of making a present for someone
- reflect on your experience of receiving a present someone has made for you
- reflect on your experience of John the Baptist during Advent

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B) SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER 2020

Creating and making

- make Christmas presents that draw attention to the recipient rather than to you the maker
- make a collage of Christmas presents: John the Baptist drew attention to Jesus not to himself
- create a poster illustrating Jesus and John the Baptist: John prepared the way for Jesus
- create a reflection, poem, or prayer on John the Baptist's gift to Jesus

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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