

Who are you?

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[0 : 00] Yeah, it's really great to be with you and I guess this morning as you heard some guy! called Daniel was coming to preach, you might have wondered who on earth is that? And as I've come this morning and many faces are in front of me and many of you are new to me.

I might have met some of you this morning or yesterday morning but if I was to ask you the question, who are you? Would anyone like to put up their hand and just tell me who you are? I won't ask everyone but it would be great to hear who some of you are. This is always risky, audience participants. Yeah, over the back, yeah. Freya, nice to meet you. Who's that? Yeah, Bethany is that. Nice to meet you, Bethany. Who's this in the middle?

Isaac, great to see you. Anyone else? A few more maybe over there. Samuel, great to see you. Yeah, over there.

Richard, cool, nice to see you. It's great to meet you this morning. It's great to hear who some of you are. And I know I've just been interviewed and asked who I am but pretend that didn't happen.

[1 : 19] A question you might ask me is who am I? So let me tell you, let me tell you who I am. I am not called John.

I'm not a fan of cricket. I'm not American. I didn't catch the bus here. I'm not over the age of 30. I don't have a Netflix account anymore.

I am not living in London. I don't have any dogs. I'm not a student. I'm just checking the slides are working. That's a bit of a weird way to answer the question, who are you?

By saying who I'm not, isn't it? If someone asks who are you, you'll generally do what some of you did just now and tell me your name.

And then you might tell me a bit more information. You might tell me where you live or what you do, whether you go to school or to work. Yet in our Bible reading that we've had this morning, some people come up to John and they ask him, who are you?

[2 : 25] It's in verse 19. Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were sent, priests and Levites, to ask him who he was.

And John doesn't say, my name is John or I'm John the Baptist. No, he says who he's not. Down in verse 20, he says, he did not fail to confess, but confess freely, I am not the Messiah or the Christ. He says who he is not. He says he's not the Messiah or the Christ.

The Messiah was someone that was promised in the Old Testament to come to God's people and rescue them. And when the Jewish leaders heard about John, heard that there was this guy in the desert preaching and baptizing people, they had to come and work out who he was.

Maybe this could be the Messiah that we've been waiting for. But John says it's not me. And that's our first point this morning.

[3 : 44] It's not me. I am not the Messiah. I haven't come to save you. And so they think, well, they still think this is someone important, but it's not the Messiah.

So who is he? So they ask him if he is Elijah. Elijah. That's what they ask in verse 21. Are you Elijah?

Who are you? Are you Elijah? And that seems quite random to me. Like if I was to come up to one of you after the service and I asked you, are you Spider-Man?

Spider-Man? That's quite a weird question to ask, isn't it? Are you Spider-Man? Of course you're not. You might look at me funny and you'll say no.

But John the Baptist is asked this. Are you Elijah? Seems a bit odd, doesn't it? But this isn't actually quite as weird as it seems.

[4 : 46] You see, back in the Old Testament, there is a guy called Elijah. And his life on earth ended in quite an extraordinary way. There's a picture on the screen of a chariot and fire.

He got taken up to be with the Lord in a chariot of fire. It must have been an amazing sight. And there was a promise made to God's people in the last book of the Bible.

It's called Malachi. And it says the prophet Elijah was going to come. And Jesus himself identifies John in Matthew's gospel as a kind of new Elijah.

So it's not quite as random as it seems. But John himself says, no, I am not. It's not me.

I'm not Elijah. And so they keep going with these questions. They then say, are you the prophet? Is that who you are?

[5 : 52] What they mean by the prophet is Moses, someone like Moses who was promised to come. And John says, no.

No, I'm not the prophet. It's not me. And I think we can learn something from John here.

I think we can learn from his humility. Like if, back to Spider-Man again, if I was to ask you, are you Spider-Man? You might be tempted to say, yeah, sure.

He seems to think I am. So I'm going to go with it. I'm going to have a bit of fun and tell you how I was climbing up some buildings yesterday and was webbing people and things like that.

You could have lots of enjoyment out of that. But John says, no, it's not me. I'm not the savior of the world.

[6 : 54] I'm not a great prophet. It's not me. We're still left with a question. Who are you, John? Who are you?

Can you tell us? And the Jewish leaders ask that question, verse 22. And John answers in this way. Verse 23. John replied, in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness. Make straight the way for the Lord.

That's what John says. I'm a voice. I've come to speak. Last week, if you were here, you'd have heard David's skull preaching on the first 18 verses of John's gospel.

He described those verses like the movie trailer to John's gospel. It was very exciting. And in these verses, we get a kind of preview as to who John is.

[8 : 02] It says in verse 6 that there was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light.

John was a witness. And witnesses speak about something or someone that they've seen. And John does that.

He's a voice. And he answers their question using words from Isaiah chapter 40. He doesn't say what his name is.

Those verses don't say this is John. It says he's a voice. A voice who comes to speak not about himself.

I think we're quite good at speaking about ourselves. But no, John uses his voice to speak about someone else. To make ready people for the Lord who was coming.

[9 : 07] He says it's not me. I'm not the Lord. I'm coming to prepare you for him. Let me tell you about my favorite bands.

They're a band called Bastille. Some of you might have heard of him. I can see one person nodding. That's great. But if you haven't heard of him don't worry.

The most famous song was probably written about nine years ago. It's called Pompeii. It's a great song. If you don't know what it is have a listen later maybe.

But anyway I got to go and see them in concert a few weeks ago down at the Brighton Centre and it was a great evening. And what happens at concerts like this is warm up acts come onto the stage and they kind of get you excited get you ready for the main act Bastille to come and the first one that came on that evening she wasn't even meant to be performing.

She was there in place of someone else who'd got COVID so she came on and her first words were something like I'm not Bastille. I'm sorry about that but they are coming.

[10 : 27] she announced with her voice and got us ready by singing with her voice got the crowd going it does it does work it got us excited building the anticipation ready for the main act and that's what John is doing he's saying it's not me but he's coming it's not me he's coming I'm a voice and John is also something else he also tells us something else about himself he says I'm a baptizer verse 26 it says I baptize with water but among you stands one you do not know he gets questioned on this baptizing that he does in the desert because it seems like something quite important quite official dunking all these people under water what's going on and baptism

I don't know if you've seen a baptism often that it's where someone's dunked under water and comes back out and it's a sign of something that's happened in their life of how Jesus has changed their life how he's forgiven their sin and brought them to new life and John's baptism is a sign too but a sign of something to come of what Jesus would do for people that's what his baptizing is about that's why he says I baptize but I just baptize with water and finally John says I am not worthy I am not worthy verse 27 he is the one who comes after me the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie his feet he is

John is tasked with preparing people to meet the Lord Jesus God in the flesh God come down but John is just a human being like you and I are we're human beings and John says I'm not even worthy to bend down on the floor and untie his sandals see back in John's time dealing with the master's feet was a job for slaves like the very lowest slave because feet are pretty gross I think they are they get dirty they get dusty they get smelly they get sweaty but John says I'm not even worthy of the job of bending down and undoing Jesus' sandals of getting near his feet not even worthy of the job of a lowest servant if after the service today

I was to go and get into my car and drive to this place this is Windsor Castle this is where the queen lives and I was to knock on the door and I was to ask to come in I'd be turned away because I'm not worthy to even step foot in there I'm not worthy to even be the queen's servant that's what John's saying about Jesus I'm not worthy to even bend down and touch the feet of God made flesh I think this is interesting looking at what John says in a world that's obsessed with self a world which wants to make sure that we have a good self-esteem kind of look in the mirror and tell yourself how beautiful how great you are post pictures the most wonderful pictures of yourself on social media and get people to tell you how wonderful you are and yet

John says I'm not the Messiah I've not come to save you I'm just a voice I baptize with only with water I'm not worthy to even do the job of the lowest slave and untie the sandals of Jesus feet John says it's not me but we're going to see in a moment that it is Jesus we're going to get to see Jesus and I'm excited to see him with you this morning but before we see Jesus we're going to sing about Jesus Mark and Anna are going to come and lead us in a song you're the word of God the father so we've seen who John is not we've seen he's not the

[16:06] Messiah he's not Elijah he's not the prophet I'm just a voice I baptize with just water I'm not worthy to even bend down and untie Jesus' sandals but it is Jesus see John's like a spotlight shining away from himself and onto Jesus if you go to a theatre a show or something you'll see lots of lights some of us last weekend Bible by the beach some of us for the Sunday evening or for the whole weekend and there were lights lots of lights and when it came to someone speaking the light would kind of shine on them pointing on them that's who you're to listen to at this moment but John's like the person operating the spotlight lights he's like the person shining the spotlight onto

Jesus away from himself onto Jesus the main act our first point was it's not him our second point is it is Jesus it's Jesus and he enters the scene down in verse 29 that's a very loud noise that's going on that's that's very exciting I feel like it's building anticipation for us as we're about to see Jesus in the Bible that's great cool back in the Bible verse 29 it says the next day the next day just as an aside Phil mentioned this earlier kind of John chapter 1 and into chapter 2 it's a series of seven days in which we're revealed more about

Jesus his first week of ministry and it should kind of point us back to Genesis 1 back where God made the world and there's those seven days those different days of creation and here in John chapter 1 we've got the beginning of something new something exciting for God's creation Jesus coming into the world maybe that might be something we can chat a bit more about tonight if we're coming tonight back in verse 29 the next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world this is the big entrance this is the main act coming onto the scene and you may expect after looking at the beginning of John's gospel you may expect John to say something like look this is the word of God look this is the creator of the world look it's the light look it's the life look it's the Messiah the Christ look it's the son of God look it's the greatest person to have ever walked the earth but John actually says look it's the Lamb Lambs are cute but they're babies they're weak they're small they're fragile and we've been waiting 29 verses for Jesus to come and he's introduced to us as the Lamb back in the Old Testament there's Abraham Abraham was promised a son and finally after years and years of waiting he got his son his promised son Isaac but God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to go up a mountain and sacrifice is promised one and only son so Abraham set out with Isaac and walked up the mountain

and Isaac was like where's the lamb dad where's the sacrifice they built an altar out of wood and Isaac was placed on there and wonderfully

God intervened as Abraham raised up his hand and was about to sacrifice his one and only son God called out Abraham God provided a ram in place of his son Isaac fast forward through the Old Testament to the book of Exodus and you've got Moses Moses was called to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt and there were these ten plagues sent on Egypt the final plague was that the firstborn of each house was going to die unless a lamb was sacrificed and its blood painted on the doorpost and so that's what the Israelites did so that their firstborn sons would not die they'd be kept safe because a lamb had died in their place and in

[22 : 22] Isaiah 53 we're told of someone who would be led like a lamb to the slaughter someone who'd be sacrificed to give us peace so throughout the Bible lambs are significant an animal dying in the place of a human being and now finally is revealed to us on day two of Jesus first week of ministry on earth is revealed to us the lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world this is great news John said I'm not the Messiah I'm not the one who's come to rescue you but look here he is it's not me it's Jesus look the lamb of God Jesus is the word is the light is the life but to bring us light and life he's also got to be the lamb of God he's also got to die in our place to take away our sin it's not me it's

Jesus maybe maybe you're here this morning and you're trying to save yourself you're trying to be the best you that you can be you're trying to be really good and yet you look inside yourself and you see it's dark you see it's empty you see the lies that you say you see how unkind you are to others you see that you're jealous to others of others you know that you disobey your mom and dad you know that you're not good but John says look the lamb of God he comes to take away our sin Jesus is the lamb he's also the baptizer

John baptized with water we've seen that but Jesus baptizes too but it's more than with just water have a look in verse 32 then John gave this testimony I saw the spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him and I myself did not know him but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me the man on whom you see the spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit that's more than water that's amazing see John is able to witness to the fact that he's seen the Holy Spirit come down like a dove and rest on Jesus back in verse 18 which you looked at last week

Jesus is come to make the Father known and now we see the spirit come to rest on him this is this is God's in three persons the Trinity God the Father the Son and the Spirit that we see and as Jesus gives the Holy Spirit baptizes with people with the Holy Spirit he changes us he gives us new life he takes away our sin as the Lamb of God and he gives us his spirit new life so when we when we see a baptism it's just with water it's just a sign of the amazing reality that Jesus has taken our sins and given us new life by his spirit it's not us who do that it's not me it's Jesus and finally in verse 34 we see that

Jesus is the chosen one or God's son verse 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one John is not the Messiah John is not the chosen one John is not the son of God it's not him it's Jesus Jesus is the one chosen by God to come and rescue people the one who's come to be the lamb of God to take away our sin the one who's come to change us by his spirit John says I'm not the chosen one but Jesus is I know that there's a good number of people in the church family here who were involved in teaching the

[28 : 04] Bible either from the front here on a Sunday or perhaps in other contexts with children maybe in Bible studies when we do that are we showing people how great we are look how much I know look at me look how well I can preach look how well I can speak to you look how clever I am or are we doing it to say don't look at me look at the Bible look at Jesus it's Jesus that can save us it's Jesus parents here as you raise your children are you showing them how great you are are you trying to show them how great Jesus is children your parents are great it's great that you have them it praise God for them but did you know Jesus is actually better

Jesus can do what no one else can do and he can save you that's really exciting he can take away our sin and he can save us it's not me it's Jesus that's what John the Baptist says it's not me it's Jesus I said earlier the world is obsessed with self try to sort out our self esteem look in the mirror and tell yourself you are beautiful you are great you are wonderful you're unique you've got this post a picture of yourself on social media and get people to tell you how great how wonderful you are but John is asked who are you he says I'm not the

Messiah I'm not worthy but look here's the Lamb of God look here's the one who comes to save us to take away our sin here's Jesus he comes to give us the Holy Spirit to transform our lives and make us worthy before God it's not me it's Jesus I don't know how you feel about yourself this morning but it's great that we can look at Jesus we can see Jesus who's loved us so much that he'd come down to live on this earth and take away our sin so we can look not to ourselves to save us not to ourselves to make us worthy but to him it's not me it's

Jesus let's let's spend a moment just quietly responding to God after what we've heard from his words and then after a minute I'll say I'll lead us in a prayer and then hand back to Philip John saw Jesus coming towards him and said look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Father we thank you that the

Lord Jesus would step down into this world God and come to be the Lamb of God to take away our sin thank you that it's not me because we can't save ourselves but it is Jesus help us to remember that and to live like that's true we pray Amen God