

"Says Who?"

- Intriguing - and completely coincidental - having Alison talking about law etc this morning!
 - for tonight's passage revolves around an essential legal concept
 - testimony
- Story of me giving testimony?
 - Donald just back from HK and in reverse culture shock!
 - in particular how what I said was part of a larger picture, filled in by different people!
- Context of testimony at time: had to be more than one witness, in agreement

The Baptist's Testimony

- First testimony Jesus identifies is that of John the Baptist
 - v.33 suggests the authorities had sent off to ask who John thought Jesus was
 - and apparently he'd "testified to the truth", ie to Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah
 - Jesus accepts the testimony as truly pointing to the truth about himself, but also notes the weakness - John is only human
 - like an unreliable witness who happens to be right on some particular key point, the whole case might be called into question
 - but Jesus is willing to have even unreliable evidence brought before the court of their opinion if it would influence their thinking to accept him!
 - for he realises that some amongst his audience might be convinced even by potentially flawed evidence!
- Folk can come to faith by the strangest routes - and we thank the grace of God, and praise him!

The Father's Testimony

- Second strand of testimony is that of the Father.
- This comes in two parts:
 - first, the work he is doing (v.36b)
 - and second, the Father's direct testimony (v.37a)

Work of the Father

- The public ministry of Jesus - the healings, the demons cast out, etc
 - but ultimately focused on the Cross and the Resurrection - the work the Father sent the Son to accomplish

Word of the Father

- Testimony to Jesus at his baptism, most likely, that John the Baptist was privileged to hear
 - but which the Jews, with their lack of faith, were denied
- Again, leap of faith to see and believe

The Scripture's Testimony

- Third strand of testimony is that of **Scripture**
 - Jews were people of the book, students of the detail of Scripture beyond what we can imagine;
 - many would have committed vast swathes of it to memory, would be diligent in studying it, interpreting it, holding it in reverence, believing they centred their living round its teaching
- But even here they couldn't/wouldn't see
 - for it is by faith that we believe, and they lacked that faith

A Hostile Witness: Moses

- Sometimes a witness in a trial will say something that changes everything:
 - that changes a burglary charge round to become one of fraud
 - that changes a rape charge to malicious accusation
- Here it is Jesus who is "on trial"
 - but during the course of the proceedings his claims have been shown to be true and valid
 - and what is emerging is that others, rather than Jesus, are truly facing accusation
- The Jews now stand before God accused of not having faith, of not accepting Jesus
 - and their accuser is none other than their "hero" Moses!
 - for he pointed to Jesus, the one who they are refusing to accept!

The Application: are we convinced?

- We've seen a number of encounters
 - Jesus and John the Baptist
 - Jesus and the first contacts with the disciples - Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel
 - Jesus and his mum, the disciples, and the chief steward at the wedding at Cana
 - Jesus and the money changers and dove sellers, not to say the Temple authorities, at the Temple
 - Jesus and Nicodemus
 - Jesus and the Samaritan woman - and her village!
 - Jesus and the official whose son he healed
 - Jesus and the cripple by Bethesda
- In each encounter, Jesus is probing, calling for a response:
 - do you believe? will you trust me? will you put your faith in me? look, see - what do you make of it all?
 - he's not interested in people being permanently intrigued!
 - he's looking for trust, acceptance, faith
- I suspect most folk here would say they believe
 - but I suspect we'd also say our faith sometimes falls short, we fail to put into practise or apply what we say we believe
 - what more will Jesus have to do than he has already done before we will trust him?
 - in our frequent confusion as we struggle to reconcile our lack of trust and understanding with our faith in an all-powerful, loving God, may well ask questions - but often, the answers are not so much difficult to see as difficult to accept
- Compare with:
 - *Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?" (John 7:31)*