

The most important person in the world

Question: Who is the most important person in the world to you?

(Yes, I know, in church, if the question is, 'What's furry, has long ears and hops?', the answer is 'Jesus', but just indulge me – I mean other than Jesus.)

Question: You're walking down the road; who is the most important person in the world to you?

(Beware! This is a trick question.)

Question: Jesus is walking down the road; who is the most important person in the world to him?

See what I mean about a trick question? The most important person to Jesus is the next person he meets. And that person **knows** they're the most important person in the world. They can see it in the way Jesus looks at them. They can see it in the way he listens to them. They can see it in the way he talks to them.

How would it be if throughout today, each of us looked at the person in front of us (or the person we're emailing) and treated them as the most important person in the world?

I could stop there, and I'd have made a really, really important point – but you know me, I just can't stop talking about Jesus...

What if they're a stranger, and you might never meet them again – say someone you meet on a bus or a train. For all you know, they might step off the train/bus and get run over and die. So, 'what I've always been taught' is that, if at all possible, I should share with them the way of salvation. (I was going to ask whether you carry a tract in your pocket or handbag, but that shows just how out-of-date I am – a gospel tract is just a click away on your phone!)

WWJD? Well, what **did** Jesus do? It would be a great Bible study to look at all the occasions where Jesus interacted with a fellow human being and see how he related to them. (I promise you that I don't have an 'answer' here that I'm trying to drive you towards, like herding cattle.)

I'll just share with you one thought that has been very special to me throughout my recent journey. Ignatius said, 'You are a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons'.

If we really believe (and we all say we believe this) that the Christian faith is about having a relationship with The Great Relationship, then it's that relationship, the person of God that we want to share with the next 'the most important person in the world' that we bump into.

I take comfort from the fact that I don't have to do everything: God is easily big enough and clever enough and loving enough to take the one thing that I do for, or say to, that person and combine it with the efforts of other Christians.

Aside: Now that's an interesting thought! Does God use the words and actions of people who are **not** Christians to point people towards knowing his love? Yes, yes, a million times yes! God will do anything and everything possible (that doesn't involve coercion) to draw people into his love. I'll give you two personal examples.

Sue's hairdresser isn't a churchgoer, but when Sue mentioned that she'd started going to the local church, Chrissy said, 'Oh, they're such lovely people there! Several of them come in here, and they're so nice.' And what if Sue had **not** been a Christian and had said to Chrissy that she was **wondering** about going along to St Ed's? I have no doubt whatsoever that Chrissy would have recommended it to her wholeheartedly.

And on a Tuesday morning, we run a cafe in the church; at 10–10.30 we have 'toddler tunes', where the children sing songs and have loads of toys to play with up there in the chancel, girded by the choir pews, the communion rail and the medieval rood screen. They have a great time in the church. The mums, dads, grandparents and carers sit around afterwards having refreshments. At first we got a few fringish churchgoers and some non-churchgoers, and they felt so at home that they invited their totally non-churchgoing friends and contacts!

Where was I? Oh yes, while I take comfort from the fact that God can coordinate the efforts of various Christians (and non-Christians!), it is also a persoanl challenge. I need to play my part in the team (even if I don't know who the other team members are). So I need to be open (another very special saying for me is 'The most important thing you wear each day is your expression'), I need to be listening – to God and to 'the most important person in the world' if I'm to know how I can play my part. If they express some sorrow or problem, maybe I could off to pray for them – or with them there and then.

I'm excited about what God's going to do **today** through us!

Father God, you love 'the most important person in the world', so when I bump into that person today, please help me to be your ears, eyes, mouth and hands to help them to be drawn into your loving arms.

Thy will be done on earth, today, through me.

Paul Bev. 27.3.19