

## John the Caretaker

What a tongue twister! Spare a thought for the reader of the Gospel at this weekend's service! Nine person names and six geographical place names in one huge sentence. All this information was to place John the Baptist securely in his historical context, for future readers like us.

John, nicknamed the Baptist, plays an integral role in the Gospel accounts. His role was like that of the recent England football manager Lee Carsley. His job was to be caretaker manager until a more permanent appointment. Likewise John was a caretaker prophet for the Kingdom of God on Earth. His mission was to be a link between the old covenant and the new covenant, between God and his creation. As a job description it was a little mixed to say the least. Positively speaking he was born to a couple who had struggled for a long time to have a family. They would no doubt too have been proud to have parented such a wise and godly young man. One who appears to have put others before himself and not been driven by personal gain. On the down side they must have been concerned when he started challenging the religious authorities for whom his Dad had worked pre-retirement. And, of course, an unjust arrest and imprisonment would follow and eventually an execution, A death ordered by a weak and selfish man, to satisfy the perverted whims of his step-daughter.

A tongue twister, to John, would probably have been no problem. He appears



to be someone never short of a few words. Most of what he had to say is lost to history, but we know that crowds flocked to the riverside to hear him speak. John's calling to speak out was a costly one indeed. Our calling to be Christ's representatives is much more sedate but no less important. As Christmas beckons there will moments

to let others know, quite naturally, that we recognise a deeper meaning to the season. I can imagine that putting a smile on the face of God.

Go well!