

Sermon by Diana Johnson

Easter 7

Acts 1: 6-14; John 17: 1-11

St Mary and St Michael, Trumpington

Sunday 24th May 2020 – Celebrating the lives of John and Charles Wesley

8am Communion Service

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O

Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. (Ps 19.14 alt.)

John Wesley was, as I am sure you all know but I'll tell you just in case, the leader of the Methodist movement in the late 18th century. It all started with John Wesley's Holy Club – a part of the Church of England at the start, and which became the Methodist Church in the fulness of time.

Upon examination of Wesley's work, it seems that Wesley used four different sources in coming to theological conclusions. Wesley believed, first of all, that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in "scripture" as the sole foundational source. The centrality of scripture was so important for Wesley that he called himself "a man of one book". However, doctrine had to be in keeping with Christian orthodox "tradition". So, tradition became, in his view and that of the Church of England then – and now, the second aspect of the so-called Quadrilateral. Furthermore, Wesley believed that faith is more than merely an acknowledgment of ideas. Thus, as a practical theologian, he contended that part of the theological method would involve "experiential" faith. In other words, truth, if actually truth, should be verified in the personal experience of Christians (overall, not individually). Finally, every doctrine must be able to be defended "rationally". He did not divorce faith from reason.

Tradition, experience, and reason, however, are subject always to scripture, which is primary. Not much difference there from the Thirty-Nine articles of faith that are the historic formularies of the Church of England. Thus, and I commend it to you on this day when we are celebrating the lives of John and Charles Wesley, the Wesleyan or Methodist Quadrilateral, is a methodology for theological reflection.

Though experience has been added and I love that, too.

The Methodists were nothing if not disciplined – and methodical – and you might enjoy, or even have your interest sparked, by hearing these read out, which are the 22 questions the members of John Wesley's Holy Club – who became the Methodist remember – [what they] asked themselves every day in their private devotions over 200 years ago.





1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
And the last one is the best question of all:
22. Is Christ real to me?

Think on these things. Ponder them in your hearts.

Amen.

Word count: 535 Time: 4.5 minutes
Approx. 125 words min⁻¹