

3rd Sunday of Advent

Reflection By Leo Holbrook

In this week's Gospel, John the Baptist begins to ruminate in prison on the identity of Jesus. He hears while imprisoned of the many miracles performed by Christ but is unsure if Jesus truly is the Messiah. John's doubts, as well as many of our own thoughts, are rooted in the perception of the self—how he envisions the savior sent by God. Before his disciples were sent to encounter Jesus, John can only visualize from what he is accustomed to: the words of the prophets and the scriptures, but we come to learn that Jesus' actions, teachings, and desires paint a path beyond the constraints of the writings known at that time. To John, and the people of the New Testament, the identity of Jesus was something more radical than their judgements could ever fathom.

When I share with others in life that I am transgender, there are many times when people will not believe it. They will either respond in one of two ways: with pleasant surprise or shocking disbelief. A select few will question whether I am being honest or not, but it shows parallelism with the Gospel. Much like John the Baptist, everyone has a preconceived vision of who a person is, and in this case, the people I encounter have their perspective on gender and character challenged. Each of those persons have a belief of how a man conducts himself, how he appears, and what he aspires to be in life. They also possess specific views of myself as the person I ought to be, based on the information they know and witness before them. Some will say that my actions and appearance make it hard to differentiate from a cis-gender man, while some will look at my identity with pride—saying how happy it makes them feel to see me living life authentically and successfully.

Jesus shows John and his disciples who he truly is in the actions and miracles he performs, just as I show the people in my life of the person I am through my work, deeds, and words. If there is any lesson to be found in this passage, it is to accept that the identity of a person is multi-faceted. Though Jesus is not the high and mighty savior envisioned in the texts—He is the Son of God that serves us all. I may not be cis-gender or one's "typical" idea of a transgender individual, but I am still a person that is part of a community, family, company, and one of God's children.

About the Author: Leo Holbrook is a transgender man who has been transitioning for six years. Originally from New York, he moved to Dublin, Ohio to pursue a career in plastics engineering at the Honda Automotive Plant in Marysville. He enjoys 3D printing and making crosses for families living with grief.