

'Why am I here?' is a question with many resonances and possible answers. But an answer we often evade – perhaps because it's not under our control or seems to go against any notion of free will - is that God has put us here – not only generally as creator but specifically with this people, in this moment and with this job or particular purpose – a job, a moment or a people we might not necessarily have chosen otherwise – it's sometimes good not to know exactly where one is heading. This line of thought was prompted by the commentary on the small passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians we've been given today and specifically on the use of the term *ekklesia* used here not for a political assembly, it's normal use in secular Greek but for the assembly or church or congregation of God which exists not through its own choice but, as the commentary goes on to say, '*because God has called it into being*'. Choice is of course involved at some point but it's worth holding on to the idea that there may be a larger purpose and cause to 'Why am I here?' than all these immediate causes and purposes that we can stack up in our defence – perhaps even room for that deliciously ambiguous response 'God knows' meaning both that I don't but perhaps God does and usually an attempt to shift blame elsewhere – it wasn't my choice after all.

What I also have in mind is the missing verse from Isaiah which highlights the prophet's or Israel's despondency.

*He said to me 'You are my servant (Israel) in whom I shall be glorified (which is the bit we have) while I was thinking I have toiled in vain, I have exhausted myself for nothing (the bit we don't)*

Missing perhaps because the compilers of the lectionary don't want to cast any doubt on Jesus' divine foreknowledge of what he's embarking on – otherwise known as High Christology and especially evident in John's gospel in which Jesus is generally portrayed as very much the person in control. Whatever the pity of that we can also see it at work here in this passage from John In which John the Baptist in a sense speaks for Jesus - so we don't have Jesus asking 'why am I here?' But we have John the Baptist called, one might say into being, in order to affirm what Jesus is perhaps supposedly already assumed to know, about himself

*Look there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world and  
Yes I have seen and I am the witness that He is the Chosen One of God.*

Now we can keep second guessing as to the psychological state of either John the Baptist or Jesus here – were they both as surprised as each other at what was taking place, as surprised as the onlookers perhaps, or is there a clue in John's foreknowledge that '*he who sent me to baptize with water had said to me 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest on is the one who is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit'*'. In other words is the Spirit of God already moving over the waters prompting both John and Jesus to come together in the Jordan for this moment of revelation to take place – and the answer to our own question 'why am I here?' is not simply to be 'God knows' but God's Spirit is at work here in ways that I do not understand but I will trust myself to this 'unknowing' knowing that God can call into being events and people not only that I am unable to control but even imagine – it's not the Church after all we have faith in but that larger purpose we call God, and which includes that call to be Church with all its failings.

*'Here I am Lord I come to do your will'.*

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