

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 3:22-26

**Kids Word:** Humility/Humble

Remember why John wrote this gospel because this purpose will be seen will see that very clearly today in today's passage. John was recording historical evidence to give us confidence that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, the source of eternal life for us. John told us this in Chapter 20:30-31, ***"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name."*** "Jesus" was his name. "Christ" was his title. Christ is Greek for Anointed One. The Hebrew word is Messiah.

There are 2 individuals named John we are dealing with here.

1. John the Apostle, a young follower of Christ, the disciple whom Jesus loved who late in his life wrote this Gospel we have been studying.
2. John "the Baptizer," cousin of Jesus, who was the messenger sent by God to prepare the way for the Messiah. We last saw him in chapter 1 of John's Gospel.

### **Let's revisit John the Baptizer from Chapter 1**

He was a big deal! He created quite a stir, and understandably so. There had been no word from God for over 400 years. Then BAM! Here's is this Prophet John speaking God's message, the virtual mouthpiece of God. Not pointing to a future Messiah, like the Old Testament prophets did, but to a "now" Messiah.

### **His Mission/Marching orders**

Mark 1:1-3 tells us the gospel of Jesus Christ started with John the Baptizer, ***"This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as it is written in Isaiah the Prophet: 'Behold, I am sending My messenger before You, who will prepare Your way; The voice of one calling out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!'"***

### **His Method**

Preaching - ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is as hand"*** Matthew 3:2. Baptizing – which was how he was labeled "the Baptizer." This baptism had a different purpose than the New Covenant baptism instituted by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. John's baptism was a public sign of an individual's acknowledgment of his need of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.

### **Jesus's Endorsement of John**

Jesus asked, "Who did you go to see? A prophet, yes. But more than a prophet, he was the very one Isaiah was talking about." ***"Among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptizer"*** (Matthew 11:11) **QUITE AN ENDORSEMENT!**

### **I. Background**

***3:22-24 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was an abundance of water there; and people were coming and being***

*baptized—for John had not yet been thrown into prison.* Jesus’s ministry started as the same as John’s! From that time Jesus began his public ministry by preaching **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 4:17). At this time Jesus and John’s ministry overlapped and they were near each other in Judea.

## II The Test/Challenge

**3:25-26** *Then a matter of dispute developed on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification. And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing and all the people are coming to Him.”* We don’t know what the dispute was about but that’s okay, that’s not the point. The point was that Jesus was eclipsing John in public following. John was an influencer and now Jesus was chipping away at his base! This concerned John’s disciples, who took a very human, earthly approach – they looked at it in worldly terms. They saw it as a problem that needed fixing! “So what do you think John? How do we solve it? What are you going to do?”

## III The Response

- John knocks it out of the park, and he presents us a great example to follow. We are introduced to our Key Idea: **“Humility is the key to having an effective ministry.”** Before you kick back and say “Whew! This message is for ministers. I’m off the hook! Hopefully, Brandon and the elders will get something out of this.”
- **Remember this point, the Bible teaches that EVERY follower of Christ is a minister/has a ministry!** We are told this in no uncertain terms in Ephesians when Paul is talking about the church: **“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:11-12). The purpose of pastors/teachers is to train US, you and me, to do the work of the ministry. “Saints” is the biblical description of EVERY follower of Christ (not just the super-pious ones). You and I are the ministers, we have a ministry to the body of Christ and to unbelievers God people puts around us.
- So, the question is not “Are you a minister?” You are! The question is “Are you good minister...or not?” The question is not “Do you have a ministry?” You do! The question is “Is your ministry effective...or not?” Fortunately for us, John is going to help us out here to show us how to be a good, effective minister. Let’s look at John’s response to this so-called problem.

**3:27** *John replied, “A person can receive not even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven.* His point? “God gave me this ministry. I didn’t make it up for me. It’s His! He can do with it whatever He wants.” Reminds us of Job when he said, “The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” John is speaking directly of his ministry here, but his statement applies to everything and everyone! I.e., to you and I and every believer and every non-believer. EVERYTHING anyone has is only because God gave it to them.

**3:28** *You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’* We saw that in John chapter 1. Are you claiming to be the Christ? No. I’m not even worthy to untie his sandals (the job of a lowly house servant).

**3:29 He who has the bride is the groom; but the friend of the groom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So, this joy of mine has been made full.**

- This is a great analogy and description. It crosses cultural boundaries. As the best man (or maid of honor) you are part of the wedding, and you have an important job to do. BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU! It's about the bride and the groom. Also, this statement was a literal description. Jesus is the groom! Who is the bride? We are. The Church. Revelation 19 tells us about the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- John didn't pause; he didn't see a problem that needs correcting, he didn't run a focus group, or ask his marketing dept for a promotional campaign to "get the customer back." **Instead, John's response is "Aw Yeahhh! It's working!"** If "high fiving" had been a thing back then, he would have high fiving his disciples. Then John makes an utterly fantastic that shows a perspective we should aspire to attain to.

**3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.** With that statement right there, John demonstrates that he is the paragon of humility. He sets the ideal that every believer should aim to replicate.

### **The Bible tells us we are living in 2 competing Kingdoms – God and Man**

This encounter in our text is a great time to contrast those kingdoms.

1. The Kingdom of God – based on HUMILITY and currency is service. This Kingdom includes loving God...valuing God and others over self.
2. The Kingdom of Man – based on PRIDE, currency is power and being served. This Kingdom includes love of self...valuing self before God and others.

**That's why there are so many admonitions in scripture for us to embrace humility and reject pride.** (Instructive exercise – take a Concordance and look up all the references to Humility and to Pride. There's a lot!)

Here a just a couple of passages covering our need for humility:

- Philippians 2:3-4 ***"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Do not merely look out after you own personal interests, but also for the interest of others."***
- I Peter 5:5-6 ***"All of you, clothe yourself with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time."***

Concerning Pride:

- Proverbs (6:16-19) tells us that there are 7 things God hates and are an abomination – 1<sup>st</sup> on the list, you guessed it - Pride.
- There's a reason God hates pride - It gives us a totally corrupted view of reality.
- Pride keeps us from living out Kingdom principals.
- Pride keeps us from what we should become as humble servants.
- If we are prideful – the last thing on our mind is to minister with a humble heart to another person.

- **If you allow pride in, PRIDE HAS YOU!** Psalm 36:11 – *Let not the foot of pride come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.* Prides stands over us with “its foot on our neck”, keeping us from the real work of the Kingdom of God.

John the Baptizer really set the bar here! He shows us a wonderfully humble spirit. He is a great example to follow, but we have a better one to follow – Who? JESUS! And, by the way, we are never told to imitate John the Baptizer, but we are told to imitate Christ. How do we imitate Christ when we can’t do a lot of the things Jesus did (like miracles)? By serving!

**Mark 10:42-44** Jesus compares the Kingdom of God vs. the Kingdom of man. He tells us the kingdom of Man judges a person is based how much power they have, how many people they can order around and have serve them. He then tells us that in the Kingdom of God it’s the opposite. You are measured by how much you serve others. *“To be the greatest among you must become a servant.”* Then He says, **“For even the I [Son of Man] did not come be served, but TO serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”** Right there is our way to imitate Christ! We serve, as Christ service.

We look to Christ’s example in two ways:

1. In His incarnation – Philippians 2:5-8 (btw, this is right after we are told to serve others in humility). *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.”*
2. In His life on earth – John 13:12-15 after washing the disciple’s feet. **“If I then, the Lord and Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”**

## **EVERY MORNING YOU AND I WAKE UP AND DECIDE WHERE ARE WE GOING TO LIVE THAT DAY...IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, OR IN THE KINGDOM OF MAN**

- We decide...Either to walk in humility or walk in pride. We choose each day because even as followers of Christ we are not robots. We don’t automatically lose pride and gain humility to moment we commit our lives to following Jesus. Which is why the Bible tells us to continually put on a heart of compassion, kindness, and humility.
- And it’s a real struggle because the world we live in is bombarding us with the Kingdom of Man propaganda. 24/7. In every area. And if we’re not actively choosing the Kingdom of God principles, we can get swept along living with the Kingdom of Man principles without even realizing it. Therefore, we need to constantly renew our minds in God’s word and in prayer, and in fellowship with other like-minded believers.

## **IV The Reasons why Jesus Must Increase – the Reasons for the Supremacy of Christ**

John then states objective reasons WHY Jesus must increase. And in verses 31-35 he gives a full rich biblical truth of who Christ is in very profound terms. (We could spend weeks on just these verses.)

**1. He has a heavenly origin – He is from above.**

- **3:31** *“He who comes from above is above all; the one who is only from the earth is of the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”* He is the uncreated Son of God who entered a human form to be with us. Every other person is from the earth. Not one of us can compare to Him! Because of this, Christianity the uniquely a **DESCENDING** religion, i.e., God came down to our level to be in relationship with us. As opposed to all other religions, which are **ACSENDING** religions (we must work, claw, and perform our way UP to meet God).

**2. HE KNOWS THINGS! He knows what He knows from 1<sup>st</sup> hand divine experience, from eternal omniscience.**

- **3:32** *What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies; and no one accepts His testimony.* Because He is of heavenly origin, He has all heavenly knowledge. There is no preacher or follower of Christ who can claim that by any means. Jesus’s knowledge was not learned. He knows what He knows as a pre-existing member of the Godhead. That means the things he knows are true. If Jesus says one thing, and someone says something else, Jesus is right and that “someone” is wrong. Not 99% of the time, but 100% of the time. John the Baptizer also tells us what John the Gospel writer told us in Chapter 1:10-12 *“and no one accepts His testimony. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* This is a general statement, not an exclusive one. The Jewish nation, neither the leaders nor most of the population, received Christ. But a few did!

**3. He is the one whom the Father promised and affirmed. Anyone who affirms Christ, affirms that God is true.**

- **3:33** *“The one who has accepted His testimony has certified (“sets his seal”) that God is true.”* God is true, He cannot lie. If that is so, then you must believe in Christ. Why? Because God has **repeatedly** affirmed Christ. Through all the Old Testament prophecy pointing to Christ, to the Angel telling Mary, Jesus’s baptism, the Transfiguration, and later His resurrection, God never stopped affirming that Jesus was sent from God. The other side of the coin is equally true. If you don’t believe that Jesus is the Messiah, you are saying God lied. John the Apostle drive this home in 1 John 5:10, *“The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.”* If God says, “This is my Son,” and, you say “No he’s not,” you are blaspheming, calling God a liar.

**4. He possesses the Holy Spirit in full...without measure or limit**

- **3:34** *“For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give the Spirit sparingly” (Without measure. Without limit.).* Christ as part of the Trinity has a completely unique relationship with the Holy Spirit. This was important because when Jesus became human, part of His incarnation was to voluntarily restrict the independent use of some of His attributes. Part of His incarnation was to yield over His will to obedience to the Father through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This was part of His humiliation mentioned above in Philippians chapter 2. That’s why Jesus would say things like “I only do what My Father tells me to do, I only say what the Father give me to say.” The Holy Spirit brought those words to Jesus. Jesus’s relationship with the Holy Spirit was so tight that in one sense, everything Jesus did in His ministry was also the work of the Holy Spirit.

That's why in Matthew 12 when the religious leaders called Jesus satanic, saying to Jesus "You do what You do by the power of Satan," Jesus didn't respond by saying "You blaspheme Me." Instead, He said, "You blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

#### 5. He has received all the authority from the Father

- **3:35** *"The Father loves the Son and has entrusted all things to His hand."* John understood that the whole of redemption and the whole of creation, the creation of the material world, the immaterial world, the plan of redemption, all of it is about the Father loving the Son and creating a universe in which He can redeem humanity and give a bride to His Son, a love gift to His Son.
- God has placed ALL things under the Son's rule. This echoes Ephesians chapter 1:20-23 where Paul writes, *"These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

#### V The Result of All This – The Bottomline/the Takeaway

- Because all of this is who Christ is, He MUST increase, He MUST be given Preeminence.
- Because of whom Christ is, John summarizes what a person's response to Jesus should be in **3:36** *"The one who believes in the Son has eternal life;"* If we believe in Christ (not just mentally agree, but actively trust and follow) we will have life eternal. *"BUT the one who does not obey/does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."* The word translated "does not obey" or "does not believe" is a Greek word that covers both actions. It means to disobey or rebel because of disbelief. Why does John link disbelieving with disobedience?
- Because the call repentance is not an offer, and invitation, but a COMMAND. Acts 17:30 *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance – God now commands all people everywhere to repent."* And if we do not believe Christ, we are being disobedient to God's command. Therefore, whoever rejects God's son...does not obey...does not believe the Son shall not see life but will receive the full measure of God's justifiable/righteous wrath.

#### CONCLUSION

The is the last recorded testimony of John the Baptizer. He was an evangelist to the end.

- **What happened?** Shortly after this, John was thrown in prison for calling out Herod for marrying his brother's wife. Then, John was beheaded on a whim by the unscrupulous Herod and his devious, scheming wife. And thus ends the life of "the greatest man born of woman" according to Jesus. (See Matthew 14 for the whole story.)
- **How would the 2 Kingdoms view this?** The Kingdom of Man view, the worldly view would respond – "What a failure! What a waste! This makes no sense. Cut down in the prime of life (John was probably in his early 30's). He didn't know when to shut up. Look where serving God got Him. You Christians are suckers if you follow a God like this. God couldn't even protect his own!"

- **The Kingdom of God view** – John’s ministry was over. His work was complete. He had done his job. He had succeeded in what he had been sent to do. God called him home from working the fields to his eternal reward.

And when the sword came down, and ended John’s physical life on earth, John opened his eyes in the presence of God and heard these words “Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master.”

So, what’s your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

**Quotes/Additional thoughts:**

**Articles/Songs/Videos:**

**Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:**

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don’t drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.

### **Challenge Questions**

*Review the BIG IDEA: Humility is the key to an effective ministry.*

**-Simple questions...**What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

### **Preparation questions for John 3:22-36.**

- What were the disciples of John the Baptizer concerned about? (3:22-26)
- What was the Baptizer’s remarkable and unnatural response to his disciples? (3:27-30)
- What did John want everyone to know about following Jesus? (3:31-36)

### **Application questions from John 3:22-36.**

- Based on this lesson, would you say you more often serve the kingdom of God or the kingdom of man? Please share some examples to explain your answer.
- Would God consider you humble or prideful? In what areas is God leading you to repent and change?

### **Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>