

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 18TH - 19TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

A FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM (JOHN 3:22-30) "AFTER THESE THINGS JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WENT TO JUDEA..." (VS. 22)

John continues His account of the life and ministry of Jesus with an emphasis on what He did in the rural areas of the region of Judea.

- While the other gospel accounts focus more on Jesus' ministry in Galilee, John chooses to record events that happened in Judea.
 - John the Baptizer's ministry had moved further north, closer to Samaria (vs. 23).
- While Jesus was with His disciples in Judea, John tells us He "spent time with them" (vs. 22b).
- Much of the ministry of Jesus was focused on intentional, quality time with the 12 disciples: traveling, eating, talking, and doing life together.
 - Too often, we think that spiritual growth happens solely through gaining information, but actually, it happens most often through relationship.
 - Relationships matter!

John also tells us that people were "baptized" through the ministry of Jesus (vs. 22c).

- John 4:2 specifically tells us that Jesus did not personally baptize, but His disciples carried on this work. This baptism was probably a continuation of the "baptism of repentance" that John the Baptizer brought.
- Disciples of Jesus have the unique privilege of being used by Jesus as instruments.

John the Baptizer was still baptizing near the region of Samaria when it was brought to his and his disciples' attention that Jesus and His disciples were also baptizing (vs. 23-25).

- Furthermore, "everyone is going to Him!"
- Put yourself in John and his disciples' sandals for a moment: baptism is their *thing*.
- John's been faithfully preaching repentance and baptism for years and gaining a following.

Then God incarnate (Jesus) shows up and starts doing the very thing that John had made a name for himself by doing.

- Don't you think, at first, he might've felt like he was being...sidelined? Made unnecessary? Being replaced? Irrelevant?
- If we're being honest with ourselves, there are many times when this very thing can happen to us in the Christian life.

We find ourselves serving God and others in a fruitful, rewarding, and God-honoring ministry, task, or service.

- We don't mean for it to happen, but slowly we start to find our identity in what we do for God and others.
- We start to find our significance, importance, and value in what we do for God and others instead of who we are in Christ.

Sometimes we think too low of ourselves: we see ourselves as insignificant in the plan of God unless we're performing certain special tasks or responsibilities.

- Sometimes we think too highly of ourselves: as if somehow God can't work to save, help, or minister to other people unless we're involved.
- It's right for us to know *whose* we are and just to be grateful that God uses us at all.

John's disciples seem bothered by the crowds going to Jesus instead of them, but John isn't bothered one bit.

- John says, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven" (vs. 27).
- Everything John had (including all who had responded to his ministry) was a gift from God.
- John was grateful for the opportunity and unique task God had given him.

John understood who he was, and he understood who Jesus was.

- John was not the Messiah, but only the one sent ahead of Him (vs. 28).
- At a wedding, the main event is the bridegroom and bride coming together: a best man trying to steal the show is tacky and inappropriate.
- John was like the best man at a wedding; he wasn't the bridegroom (vs. 29).

"HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE..." (VS. 30)

It was good for John to become less visible and known so that Jesus could become more visible and known.

- Is it important to you to be visible and known by other people? Why?
- Is it enough for you just to know that people are seeing and knowing Jesus better, even if that means they do not see you?

ABOVE ALL (JOHN 3:31-33)

Scholars are divided as to who is speaking in John 3:31-36: is it John the Baptist or is it now John the Apostle?

- Either way, we're given a strong presentation of who Jesus is, what He's come to do, and the truth to which Jesus testifies.
- Jesus wasn't just an exceptionally spiritual or wise or good man; He was and is God, the one who came from above and is above all (vs. 31a).

Every human being, including John the Baptizer, is from the earth and belongs to the earth.

- But Jesus' origin is heavenly, and it is eternal. He has always existed, therefore, He is above *all*.
- Since Jesus came from Heaven, He represents God the Father, and to reject the testimony and words of Jesus is to reject God (John 5:23).
- We can trust that the testimony of Jesus is true because Jesus is the true God.

"HE TESTIFIES TO WHAT HE HAS SEEN ..." (VS. 32A)

Because Jesus came from Heaven and is above all, what He shared about what He had seen and heard from the Father is trustworthy (Jn. 8:38).

- Everything Jesus tells us about God is firsthand knowledge: He didn't need to rely on someone else's information.
- We can trust everything Jesus said about life, death, Heaven, Hell, how to live, and the end of all things.

"...YET NO ONE ACCEPTS HIS TESTIMONY..." (VS. 32B)

For 400 years, the people of Israel had been waiting for a revelation from God and for the coming of the promised Prophet.

- And yet when God Himself came, almost no one responded and accepted His testimony as true.
- Jesus affirmed this when He said, "...small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:14).

"THE ONE WHO ACCEPTED HIS TESTIMONY HAS AFFIRMED THAT GOD IS TRUE" (VS. 33)

If you receive the words of Jesus as true and put them into practice in your life, you will see God's truth and experience God's power firsthand.

- "Believing is seeing": it's not enough to just study or admire the words of Jesus from a distance; to affirm the power of the truth of God in our lives, we must accept all that He is as God.

ETERNAL LIFE (JOHN 3:34-36)

Jesus did not come to deliver His own message but to speak the words of God (vs. 34).

- In a sense, Jesus came as the ultimate and greatest prophet.
- Prophets in the Old Testament spoke God's Word and were given God's Spirit with just the right measure of power for just enough time to fulfill their assigned prophetic task.
- Jesus was given the Spirit without measure.

Jesus is God the Father's beloved Son (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), and because the Father loves the Son, He has given Him all things (vs. 35).

- Jesus has authority over life and death, forgiveness and punishment, salvation and condemnation.
- Jesus has the power and authority to give eternal life.

"THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON..."

The word "believe" (*pisteuo*, to be allegiant and loyal to) in vs. 36 is contrasted with the word "reject" (*apeitheo*, to disobey, rebel, be disloyal to, or to refuse).

- The testimony, work, and identity of Jesus require an active response from us as human beings: that response is to "believe" in Him by being loyal, allegiant to, and obeying Him.

"...HAS ETERNAL LIFE..."

Eternal life doesn't *just* mean we go to Heaven when we die: Jesus will give those who believe in Him eternal life right now!

- Eternal life ("*zoen aiōnios*") is the state of being spiritually alive because the very life of God dwells inside of us through the Holy Spirit.
- That life begins when we put faith in Jesus and will continue forever.

"...BUT THE ONE WHO REJECTS THE SON WILL NOT SEE LIFE..."

To reject Jesus is to disobey, rebel against, be disloyal to, or refuse Him.

- There are many people who claim a saving faith in Jesus while they reject Him at the same time by not obeying His Word.
- What we believe and how we live are intertwined: if you haven't turned from your sin and obeyed Jesus, you're still rejecting Him, and you will not see life.

"...INSTEAD, THE WRATH OF GOD REMAINS ON HIM..."

The opposite of eternal life is eternal death, which is the wrath of God—separation from God.

- A person doesn't have to die and go to Hell to be under the wrath of God: "anyone who does not believe is condemned already" (vs. 18).
- The verdict has been given, but the sentence has not yet been executed—God is patient and long suffering and is calling sinners to repentance.

HE MUST INCREASE, I MUST DECREASE.

- People in our world are constantly vying for attention, the spotlight, and the chance to "be known" or "be discovered" (there are lots of reasons for this).
- The desire of our hearts as friends of the bridegroom should be for Jesus to be known and loved: not for us to be known and loved first.
- Do you find your significance through being known and seen? Or through who you are in Jesus?

CHRIST ABOVE ALL.

- There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will return to this earth in His glory and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).
- Jesus is Lord above all now, but not everyone accepts that testimony. Do you?
- Is He Lord above all things in your life? Or do you consult, obey, and follow other things above Him?

ETERNAL LIFE.

- God's offer is to place the very life of God inside of us through the Holy Spirit.
- That life begins when we place faith in Christ and will continue forever.
- But if we reject Jesus through disobedience, apathy, or rebellion, we won't see that life. We will remain under the wrath of God!
- Are you fully alive?

BELIEVING IS SEEING.

- It's not enough to just study or admire the words of Jesus from a distance.
- To experience the truth and power of God in our lives, we must step out in faith.
- Let go of your sin, believe in Him, and receive Him into your life in obedient, trusting faith.
- It's only then that you can confirm and authenticate that Jesus is everything the Word says He is.