

The Rev. Randall R. Shirley
May 17, 2020 Sermon
John 3:25-30

This morning we find ourselves in this passage often referred to as John the Baptist Exalts Christ, or in some Bibles titled, John the Baptist Endorses Jesus; and, I want us to dig into this passage to find John the Baptist modeling Humility. Modeling that heart of Humility that we're to have within our ministries. That heart of Humility that we're to have within our Christian walk. For so many it is difficult to show as much humility as the Lord would like.

As the world around us continues to move further away from God's ways, humility is no longer seen as a positive trait it is seen as a weakness. A flaw that should be avoided at all costs. Some even believe that humility runs contrary to leadership, and that humility runs contrary to what's required to get ahead in the world today. So many have the wrong impression of what humility is all about. CS Lewis says, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." When we can think of ourselves less, only then can we move away from self-centeredness to find, in God's mercy, that His Power is seen by others in what we do and in what we say.

It is this humility, of thinking of yourself less, that is seen in great leaders. It is where we hear Harry S. Truman say, "It's amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care about giving the credit to other people." Because in the absence of humility pride steps in, and in God's plan for our lives pride becomes an obstacle. Pride leadings ministers to be about feel-good programs and pageantry. Pride leading Gods' people to seek after them.

We see the Apostle Paul confronting this lack of humility within the church at Corinth. The church there was being torn apart from within. The people arguing about which minister to follow, dividing themselves into groups. Some saying, I follow you Paul others saying I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas. Paul saying to them in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 1, "Who am I, who is Apollos, who is Cephas." Paul stressing that it's not about him or the other ministers it's all about Jesus.

Paul then saying in Chapter 2, that he did not come proclaiming the gospel with lofty speech or wisdom, but rather for the people to only hear about Jesus Christ and him crucified. In Paul's humility he says, that "I came in weakness so that your faith would not rest on my wisdom, or that of the other ministers, but in the power of God. Humility, the heart of our Christian walk.

God's Word is clear that all of us are to have this humility. As Peter says, "To clothe ourselves with humility towards one another," and as he continues in First Peter 5, "That God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." This is the humility we see within John the Baptist. John consistently saying that it's not about him, and always pointing to Jesus. John telling the

Pharisees in Chapter 1 that he was not the Christ, but rather the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, to make straight the way of the Lord.

We know from John's first Chapter, that after Jesus is baptized and His ministry begins. John the Baptist and his disciples continue with their ministry. There are two ministries going on at this time. Two ministries going on for some 6 months until John is thrown in Jail. You see, John the Baptist continued with his ministry to preach repentance and he continues to point to Christ. Only now, John the Baptist is pointing directly to Jesus as the Messiah. However, there is a problem in John's ministry.

It's not a problem with John the Baptist. The problem is with John's disciples - it's their lack of humility leading to pride and its companion. The companion of pride is the unhealthy competitive nature. As The Rev. Dr. Rod Whitacre states, "Just as the first disciples of Jesus came from among the ranks of John's disciples, the first real offense taken with Jesus is also from John's disciples." They are upset. John's disciples are upset because Jesus and His ministry are becoming more popular than John the Baptist and his disciples. Not only are John's disciples upset, their pride has them rejecting John's testimony.

Follow along with me in your Bible. In verse 26 of our Gospel Reading this morning, we heard, "And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he's baptizing, and everyone is going to him." It's a cry of competition. "Hey John, don't you care about losing our people? Our people are leaving us and going over there!" Their pride has blinded them. They call him Rabbi. They call him Teacher, but they do not really mean it. They do not follow John's teaching. They reject his witness. They think they are doing God's work, and yet they are blinded by pride missing out on what God is really up to - and what a tremendous warning this is for us

If we are honest with ourselves, we know how easy Pride and The Unhealthy Competitive Nature can creep within our ministries. Where we are more concerned about our image, than others being formed in His image. It is just as easy as we've seen people who have heard the gospel and then pick and choose those parts they want to follow? Or, how about when the popularity of Jesus one's life is met with so much opposition? I see a lot of this in marriage counseling. When one partner is seeking after the things of God while the other partner is still chasing after the world. In situations like these, in times of being confronted by others who are blinded, John the Baptist models the humility that all true believers are to have. John does not get angry. John the Baptist stays the course. His humility continues to bear witness to Jesus, and he does this as one filled with joy.

John the Baptist gives us a wonderful image of his joy. In verse 29, John is rejoicing saying he is filled with joy like that of being the best man at a wedding. Full of that type of joy that comes from seeing your best friend getting married. The joy of hope and expectations of their night and

future together. All eyes on them. What an image for us to see that it is not about us. In verse 30, he makes that point perfectly clear that Jesus must become greater within our lives. That we must decrease and the outworking of God's call and plan for our lives and living into His Will must increase. Not only does John the Baptist model humility, he's teaching us how we should be as true disciples of Christ.

It is when we grasp this understanding of who we are, our identity in Christ, that it is about Jesus, only then can we come back to better understand what John is getting to in verse 27. Here John says, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it's given him from heaven." My friends, we have now come to the key point of today's sermon. The point being that all ministries, my ministry, your ministry, are all gifts. Gifts given by God in His mercy to his humble people. As Pastor John MacArthur says, "Ministry is a mercy. It's something you don't earn, something you don't deserve, something you are given even though you're unworthy."

That is so true. Just listen to how Paul opens 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4, stating that his ministry, and that of all believers, is by the mercy of God. Every believer has a purpose and ministry given to us out of God's mercy. You cannot earn it - what a privileged to have this gift and to be the Friend of the Bridegroom. We are privileged to be the friends of Jesus, where we stand and hear His voice, rejoicing greatly at His Words. This is our joy that He increase within our lives.

Sadly, the enemy has twisted the proud to reject our Lord and Savior's teachings, or to simply ignore them. We know that everyone who hears the gospel, is faced with the same question: "What will you do with Jesus?" You can, as many do, simply choose to ignore Christ and the Bible. You can go on living your life, doing the best you know how. But then what? What happens when it comes time for you to depart from this earthly overlayer?

It reminds me of The Rev Jonathan Meyers who took a taxi to convention. Jonathan tells the story of his driver who seeing his clerical collar laughingly said, "I feel sorry for you Christians. There you are, putting everything on your belief in an after-life. You work, pray, give up everything. Then when you get to the end you discover there's nothing there after all." Jonathan said he just sat there for awhile and then responded. "Supposing I am wrong? Supposing there's no heaven, no judgment, no after-life or anything like that. Even so, I still win! "Here I am, firm in my conviction that life isn't the product of chance. I believe with millions of others that we're here on this world for a purpose. That Jesus Christ has beaten back death, and I'm motivated by the sense of His living presence with me every day. So, when I come to the end of my days on earth, I go out believing that my energies have all been spent for a lasting purpose. If you are right, I won't even have the disappointment of knowing that I was wrong!"

Jonathan continued, "Supposing you're wrong and I'm right? There you are, struggling to make a living to earn enough money to keep yourself together and you do not even know why. You

fight off illness and decay for as long as possible, but in the end, you know you must die. Then you find yourself confronted by the very person you have ignored all your life. You realize that everything you've lived for was wasted. It has all been for nothing.”

My friend Jonathan had just started to witness to a non-believer. And yet, so often in ministry we see believers who also need to hear the Word, to be encouraged, to have the blinders removed. This is why our Super Wednesday Night teachings are so important. Why Sunday School at any age is important.

This morning we have been given a glimpse into the vast difference between John and his disciples. Between the joy of true discipleship in humility, always pointing to Christ, and how those blinded are led by pride, and unhealthy competition in their ministries. We see that it's only in humility that we come to see ministry as God's gift. Our ministry is His ministry entrusted to us for His work and His power to be seen through us for the benefit of others.

You know, later on in this account, John the Baptist is arrested – And he's still fighting with his disciples regarding Jesus. But, John's love for them is unwavering! While John is in prison, he sends two of his disciples to question Jesus. John the Baptist did this to help his disciples. To help them transfer their allegiance to Jesus. We know this to be true, as Jesus himself later bares testimony to John's faithfulness. Telling us in Matthew, Chapter 11, that John the Baptist was the greatest man, the greatest servant of God who had ever lived.

My friends, we are to take notice of John the Baptist and in his humility. Humility; It is the heart of our Christian Walk.