

Gospel of John: That You Might Believe

"He Must Increase" – March 14, 2021



Introduction

If significance is based on performance, we assess our value through competition and comparison. In that case, each day is a day to prove ourselves, to justify our existence in the eyes of others. In John 3, we see a path to true joy (a contentment no matter the circumstance) that's radically different than the path the world prescribes.

Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response. To help, use [Psalm 119:33-40](#) as a prayer for God to open His word up to you.

Sermon Outline

- I. Put the spotlight on Jesus, not yourself ([3:22-30](#))
- II. Rest in God's love by receiving Jesus' testimony ([3:31-36](#))

Read & Discuss

- 1) Read [3:22-30](#)

When John the Baptist's disciples begin to notice folks leaving *him* to follow Jesus, they are concerned. What is the difference between their response and John the Baptist's? In v27 we noted how John embraced God's providence – rather than pining for a role that would give him more prominence, he accepted his role and did it for the glory of God. How does embracing God's providence help us grow in contentment? How is embracing God's providence not a call to mediocrity that squashes ambition?

Who do you most identify with in this narrative: John the Baptist (who embraced God's providence) or John's disciples (who chafed under God's providence and lusted for the praise and acceptance of others)? Take a moment to pray, reflect and discuss. What are steps you can take to move toward the freedom that comes from caring *most* about God's opinion of you and *less* about what others think?

Additional Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 3:21-4:4

- 2) Read [3:31-36](#)

What is the difference between one who speaks in an 'earthly way' compared to Jesus who testifies to what He has seen and heard as one who is *from* above, *from* heaven? It's helpful to compare John the Baptist (who accepts Jesus' testimony) with Nicodemus (who did not receive Jesus' testimony). Why was it hard for Nicodemus to follow Jesus down the path to true joy (see [5:44](#))?

While John the Baptist represents one who *does* rejoice in Jesus and *does* receive His testimony, it's helpful to remember that John was a man just like us. As John later suffered in prison, doubt would creep in and he would begin to wonder, "Was I right to believe Jesus is the Christ?" In [Matthew 11:1-6](#) he sent messengers to Jesus *with* such a question and Jesus' response was masterful: he points John back to Scripture, showing how He was fulfilling what the prophets had said. In the same way, when we get sucked back into the world's value system, trying to justify ourselves when we've *already* been justified in Christ, we need the same reminders from God's word and God's people that John needed. Faith comes from *hearing* God's word Paul says in Romans 10:17. Who might you encourage today with God's word who may be struggling with doubt?

Jesus is not only loved by God the Father ([3:35](#)) with a perfect, abundant, satisfying love, Jesus prays that we'd experience the same love (see [Jn. 17:23](#))! How does being loved by God help set us free from the *need* to be noticed, needed, liked by others?

Additional Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:21, Luke 9:23-25

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come.

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*Next week's sermon text: we turn to Acts 1 – "Power for a new mission"
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