

Title: To Add You must Subtract

Text: John 3:22-36 (22-30) →

(Two Keys)

(68)

He must increase - I must decrease

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn to John chapter 3. The third chapter of the gospel of John beginning with Vs 22. There are notes in your bulletin. Please use them as we study these verses together.

(Read John 3:22-36)

Prayer

(113) In this section of scripture we ~~find~~ find that Christ is once again putting himself on public display. ^{He} His being publical manifested. It is kind of interesting because we have already found that John the Baptist, back in chapter 1, publical introduced Jesus to the World. ⁽⁶⁰⁾ And now, John the Baptist is facing his motivations and his ~~inter~~ inter feelings about why the world is now going after Christ. Much like many of us do.

I don't believe there is a section in John that so digs into the motivations of the believer like this portion of scripture. It really hits hard. It might be a little touchy, if you ^{are} ~~are~~ sensitive in this area.

There are three things that ~~He is going to deal with in these first few verses.~~ ^{I want to look at in these}

(One, deals with Baptism and the problem that arose over it.

^{one} ~~two~~, he ^{deals with} ~~is going to look at~~ the issue of the bridegroom and the bride.

And ^{secondly} ~~three~~, as to motivation, ^{he} ~~is~~ is going to talk about belief in Jesus and how that effects him as a individual believer, ~~and his motivations towards that.~~

() So, let's look at these ~~verses~~ verses, first of all, in relationship to Baptism .

Vs 22..The Bible says that Jesus and his disciples were in the land of Judea and they were baptizing.

(1) And the first thing I learn about baptism, here, ~~is that the place, and that they were baptizing in the same area that John was.~~ ^{the circumstances were that Jesus was there in the same area that John was.} ^{But} And they were baptizing.

Vs 23 says that "John was baptizing in 'A'non' which means 'spring'. And it was near "Sa'lom" which ^{means} ~~peace~~ "peace." "Because there was ~~much~~ water there;" ~~where~~ ^{where}, they were baptizing.

Turn over to John 4:2, I learn that Jesus, himself, did not baptize people. That is probable good. Because I am sure there would have been those folks going around with great pride saying, "I have been baptized by Jesus." And I am better than someone else.

Vs 2 says that "Jesus was not baptizing, but his disciples were." Vs 1 is also interesting. It says that "Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John."

Now, according to the Bible the place and circumstances that started to affect John's disciples was the matter of baptizing. Because Baptizism was an open sign of their loyalty. You made disciples. And the method was by baptizing.

Now, in the case of John. His baptism was the baptism of repentence. He would urge people to prepare themselves for the coming of the kingdom of God.....The question is: WAS JESUS DOING THE SAME THING?.....Absolutely.... Jesus was baptizing exactly like John the Baptist did. (I know that ~~that~~ from many reason. First, the Bible says so. Secondly, when John was in prison the Bible says that Jesus took up the message and ministry of John the ~~Baptist~~ Baptist. He preached the same thing. Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Baptism of John was a moral and spiritual preparation of Jewish people of the coming of the Messiah.

Now, the problem that arose here according to Vs 25 of chapter 3 was a question of purification. ~~It~~ baptism was a baptism of cleansing, preparing men's hearts; and now Jesus appears to be doing it. So, there is a little bit of a problem between the disciples of John and Jesus.

I notice back in Vs 23 that John was baptizing there because there was much water. I believe that Baptism was by immersion whether it was the baptism that Jesus commanded before his ascension, or John's baptism. I also believe that John's baptism was by immersion. And I also believe that Jews when they baptized it was also by immersion.

But the issue of immersion is very important here. Because pagans also immersed in water as signs of cleansing. Even in the pagan temple BAAL'A"BECH in Lebanon today, if you go there you will find large pools where people are cleansed. They are immersed in these pools before that ~~then~~ worship at these pagan altars and these pagan temples.

Now, the issue here effects the meaning of Baptism. That baptism was ~~some~~ somehow a cleansing, preparing the way for the Messiah. And John taught that He had that responsibility from God.

Elijah the prophet had come in the spirit of Elijah, and John the Baptist is preparing them. He is crying as one crying ~~in~~ in the wilderness.

So, the question is: what right does Jesus have and his disciples have to do that? It is kind of funny if you stop and think about it. They are forgetting that He is the Messiah. But it was a problem to them. They were baptizing many. But they were concerned about the lack of attention that was coming their way.

Isn't it interesting how when God begins to work through others, and does more than what he has done through us, how that effects us. Maybe a friend of yours has been more blessed by God than you. That is in terms of outward fruitfulness. And so you conclude then: that perhaps he is doing it in the wrong way. Or, there is some wrong with him. Or, you might conclude that there is something wrong with me. Because God has not blessed me like him. Then the spirit of pride stays within you through all your times of introspection, trying to find out what is wrong with you. It stays with you because your comparison is with a friend over here who is being blessed by God. HOW FOOLISH ARE ALL OF THESE REASONS. How terrible foolish.

The fact that all folks would come to Jesus, isn't that what John wanted? Isn't that what his disciples wanted?

John the Baptist, Jesus said, was the greatest human being that has ever been born of a woman. That is quite a statement. And John was upset by the fact that all were going to Jesus.

And so we have a principle here that we need to understand. The principle begins in Vs 27...

According to Vs 26 they were concerned that all men were coming to Jesus. Well, that is what we want. We want people to go to Jeus. John wasn't unhappy about that. And here is the principle that he establishes in Vs 27:...

"John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from haaven."...

That is quite a statement.

(1) The first thing I learn about this princple he is laying down is that the acceptance of truth, whatever it is, is given by God,...

John's point is this: If men are responding to Jesus, remember that nothing can be given accept it be given by God.

You know, that really thrilled me. It realy did. I Corinthians 4:7 says that you and I have received absolutely nothing in our life that God didn't give to us.

So, why is it that we get up tight when God is blessing another believer more than he is blessing us? God is doing what he wants to do in our lives. And the issue is faithfulness to what God has given to you. Not trying to do what your brother or sister is doing. That is very, very important.

All men were coming to Jesus. And John remainds his disciples. "Listen, a man can receive nothing except it be given to him from haaven."

By the way, that can be applied to your stewardship as well. Everything that you own, all the possessions in your life, God gives it to you.

You say, "Wait a minute! I have my job. I make the money. God gave you the compasite to make money. He gave you the compasite to have a job. Just talk to someone who loses his job.

The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. God is in control of these things. And we have not received anything except that God permitted us to have it. God is working all things like this.

So, John is saying: "Hay, praise the Lord."....DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY?....

(2) The second thing that I notice about this principle is that John acknowledges that he is the one that isn't important anyway.

Vs 28, "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the christ, but, I have been sent before him."

It is Jesus that is important. Not his workers. And here we find the problem among believers within the church. Believers resenting what God is doing in another believers life.

(2) Now, beginning with Vs 29, we find the second issue which is coming out of the first one of baptism and the problem that developed. The second issue deals with the bridegroom. And I don't know of any two verses that have more things in it for the believer than these two verse. They are great. Vs 29...John goes on to say.....(Read Vs 29-30)

Notice the ^{Title} ~~title~~ of the message. TO ADD YOU MUST SUBSTRACT. You get the idea from s 30. Three things concerning the bridegroom.

(1B) One..I notice the relationship of John to him. He says is like a friend.

Let me take a little side trip at this point. Many people see here a typical, symbolical understanding of John's illustration of a marriage. That is that they believe that the bride ~~is~~ is the body of Christ, the church. And I believe that..

They also see the "friend" of the bridegroom as a Old Testament believer ~~represented~~ Represented by John the Baptist. And I also believe that fact.

The marriage supper of the lamb, which is predicted in Revelation 19 to be a tremendous feast which Jesus Christ will host and all believers from all ages will be there, will be on earth at the beginning of God's kingdom on earth. And Jesus will introduce his bride, the church, to all the ~~believers~~ believers of all the ages. The friends of the bridegroom will be there, Old Testament saints. And actually amazed at this wonderful bride he has.

✗ Now, I ^{believe} ~~think~~ that is ^{True} ~~fine~~. But I don't believe that is the main point here. I think John is simply giving the illustration of the marriage to say one thing. The friend of the bridegroom, or the best man, or the maid of honor, if you like it better that way, is not the most important figure. It is the bridegroom and ^{not} the bride.

The point you see is very important to believers. The most important one is Jesus, not you...^{not me}.

I have always been amused at certain weddings where the best man is better looking than the groom. At least he thinks he is. I have had some weddings where the best man has become obsessed with how great he looks. And when you come in from the side door and take your place down in front, here, he sort of stands out in front of the bridegroom. You know, smiling at all the girls in the audience, hoping that he will be noticed...And here ^{his} Brian is getting married.

The issue: the bridegroom and the bride. But you see, he is overcome with the fact that he is all dolled out in this tux. And boy I look great..You know....He can hardly stand it...He thinks he looks so great.....

I see that all the time. And it sort of amuses me....

^{Suppl} But you know, as believers we often do that. We forget who is important. The important one is Jesus. Not the workers. And we miss that, you see, many many times. ^{and} That is John's point. A simple point. He who has the bride is the bridegroom.

(2B) Now, the second thing that struck me is the rejoicing of John, over the simple voice of the bridegroom. Do you realize what this means?

John the Baptist in the wilderness was a great preacher. I mean he could just thunder out. The Bible says that all Jerusalem and Judea ^{went} ~~went~~ out to ^{hear} ~~hear~~ him. * And now, what is happening?.....They are all going to ^{hear} ~~hear~~ Jesus. Guess who was also in that crowd?....John.....He went to hear Jesus also... Did you think of that when you read Vs 29?

The verse says "that the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice."

There is no question who he is talking about the friend because he says "this joy of mine has been made full."

Do realize that John had stood by and listened to Jesus. Watch the disciples now go after Jesus.....Watch the people that He had minister to go after Jesus.

And John stood by and heard him preach and he said "just to hear him has made my joy full."

And I reflected upon that in my Wown life. And I hope you will also. Just to stand and hear the voice of Jesus. Your joy will be made full. Do you know the greatest priority in the believers life is Jesus. There isn't anything more important. Stand still and listen to Him. WHY ARE WE SO UP-TIGHT ~~UP-TIGHT~~? The answer is found in John 3:29...The reason people do not have joy is because they are not stopping and listening to Jesus.

Paul spent three years in the Arabian dessert. Some people say, "What a shame." Listen, God knew what he was doing out there.

Moses spent 40 years preparing before he took the people of Israel out of bondage. 80 years old he was at that time. What a shame, Wasted all those years. Are you kidding. He didn't wast those years.

Or, take a look at the home that Jesus so often visited. Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived. And he went there on one occassion, according to Luke 10. Mattha is serving the meal. And she is excited. Hay! the master is coming. Let's get out the himlocks.....Oh!!! I sorry. They were Jews...She is exited. Jesus is coming. And she is busy with the preparation of the meal and ~~she~~ ^{Be} serving. That is important. But not the most important thing.

And Mary was setting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Mis voice. That is all. Martha got all upset. She said, "Jesus don't you care about this dinner. I mean, if you do, then get Mary up here to help me."

Jesus said, "Martha, Martha you are troubled about so many things. But there is just one thing that you need. And Mary choose the best part.

You see, to ~~be~~ take the time out from your busy, busy schedule to set down and listen to Jesus is the most important time that you could ever spend in your day. That is the joy, the sustaining joy. TAKe Time With Jesus Personal Devotions

And isn't it interesting that Mary who sat at his feet doesn't appear to be the active one, yet, over in John 12, Just before Jesus was arrested we find him stopping once again at the home for dinner. And it was at that dinner that Mary knew something that no one else knew, including his disciples. And that is that Jesus was telling the truth. He was going to die and be buried. And buried....

Do you think the disciples believed that even though they heard it from Jesus?...Listen, they didn't believe it. And at the time of the cross they all forsook him. But Mary understood it. One of the few. And Jesus commented on it. He ~~to~~ thought it was so tremendous.

What Mary had done was that she took one years wages and purchased some precious ointment and she purchased that ointment, according to Jesus, for his burial. In other words, she believed he was going to die. And she bought all that ointment just for his burial.

But, you know, it was just a few days ~~now~~ before the cross and Mary was there in the house and she loved him so much that she couldn't wait. She broke that bottle of ointment and poured it all over his feet. The tears were flowing down her face and mixing in with that ointment. She wiped his feet with her hair.

and

Judas said, "Hay! that ointment could be sold and the money givento the poor." But Jesus said, "You have the poor always with you. But you will not always have me with you." "And let her alone. What she has done is for my buraiial". And this act of faith will be a memorial for all generations."

One woman showing that she loved Jesus so much she couldn't wait to save that ointment for the barial. She had to pour it on him now. She jus t had to deminstrate her love.....Isn't that a great story?

Why did Mary do that? Because she was a woman who learned to set at the feet of Jesus and listen to him.

Listen, ^{Christen} ~~believer~~, there is a lot of admonish for us here. I don't care how busy you are, if you don't have time to be alone with Jesus and to listen to him, you are never going to have joy in your life.

The happiness of the moment that ~~passes~~ passes away so quickly. The big weekend, the big outing. It doesn't last. And you and I both know it. But you just keep trying. Just keep trying to buy happiness in things. And one day you will wake up a broken person, empty inside, far away from the chruch and Christ, no real happiness. No sustaining joy. Why? Bedause you don't know where joy is. Joy is in learning about Jesus.

(3rd) And it is beautiful here in terms of humility. Because the ^{second} ~~third~~ thing I notice is the realization of Hohn in Vs 30. That ^{Learn} ~~Christ~~ must increase, but John must decrease. That is the plan of God. It is humility. And if you are living for Jesus this is what will happen ^{in your life}

Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are burdened down. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke (not your yoke) but my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest ^{for} your soul."

So, where do you get rest? Where do you get peace? How do you have joy? ^{When you are learning Jesus} Learn from ~~Christ~~. Learn from him. And if you do, you will learn meekness.. You will learn lowliness. You will learn humility... ^{and that will} ~~but~~ bring you great joy in your life... And great peace ^{and rest} ~~and great power~~, you never dreamed possible. Take the time out and set with Jesus. He must increase.

^{6/14} () Then in Vs 31, ^{3rd} he illustrates this truth in the area of belief. He is illustrating it in the area of belief. You must believe in Christ. But he shows you how this affects his motivation, his humility of ~~Christ~~ ^{Jesus} increasing and we decreasing. Let me share with you just four things about this matter of believing.

(1) ^{one} ~~He~~, relates to the position of ~~Christ~~ ^{Jesus}, Vs 31 "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and ^{speaks} of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all."

The point is: who is the one that we should look to? Jesus... Why?... Because of his position. He is above everything.... Don't you think you ought to spend a little time with someone like that? He is above everything... Number one priority. Jesus is more important than your wife and children. He is more important than your job. He ~~is more important than your witness to a lost person.~~ And all of ^{those} ~~these~~ priorities flow out of that commitment to Christ. But, you see, Christ should be number one. He will make your marriage happy. He will make your priority to your wife and children greater. He will make your job more meaningful. He will help you in your witness. WHY? Because ¹ he is number one.... He is above all... Do you recognize that in your life?... Or, has some things gotten in the way....

(2.) The second thing that I notice relates to his preaching Vs 32 says, "What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness. He ~~who~~ ^{who} has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is ~~is~~ true."

You listen to Jesus and you will know that God is true. You really will. You listen to Jesus and your heart and life ~~will~~ ^{will} respond...

(3) The third thing I notice relates to his power. Vs 34 and 35. Two tremendous things are said here. Vs 34 says "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."

(1) Now, for a moment think about who is saying this? John the Baptist... Why is that important? John the Baptist, according to Luke 1:15-17 was a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mothers womb until the day he died. Here is a man who has been controlled by the spirit, all of his life. And yet, he says about Jesus that God didn't give the spirit ~~to him~~. But he does to us. You see, the Spirit is God. God almighty. And you have the Holy Spirit controlling you, fine...But, all there is to the Holy Spirit isn't just controlling you.....

But ~~it~~ it was, in the case of Jesus Christ....Why?.....The Father and the Son and the Spirit are one in essence and being and substance. All the fulness of God dwelled in the body of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in his Prayer in John 17 "The Father is in me and I am in him." On another occasion in John 10:30 he said, "I and the Father are one." He said in John 14 "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

They are one. Even though they manifest themselves in other personalities The point is: that Jesus ought to be loved. He ought to be worshipped. Because God didn't just give a measure of the Spirit to Jesus. He is the Holy Spirit in a sense. In ~~there~~ ^{their} oneness...~~there~~ ^{their} unity....their substance... The Holy Spirit of ~~God~~ ^{God} was in Jesus and Jesus was in the Spirit and the Father ~~is~~ in the son and the son in the father...Mystery...But powerful...

And that is why we should look up to him. That is why we should love him. That is why we should worship him. Because he has all the power in the universe. Because he is God....

So you had better think twice when you ignore talking with ^{Jesus} him and listening to his voice.

(2) The second thing about that power is in Vs 34 "The Father loves the son, and has given all things unto his hand." Don't you think we ought to talk to somebody ^{who} ~~who~~ is controlling all things? All things are in his hands.

Stand and listen to the voice of Jesus and your joy will be full. And you will know why He must increase and we must decrease. Why? Because he has everything under his control.

(4) And then finally, as ^{Jesus} ~~it~~ relates to his purpose in Vs 36, John says, listen, you don't believe in me and get saved, "you believe in the son and you will have eternal life."

Christ came into the world to give us everlasting life. And if you have believed on ^{Jesus} ~~Christ~~ you have it. Are you talking with the one who gave you everlasting life?

Acts 4:13 Peter and John, fishermen. They had never been to Seminary. They stood before the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling body in Israel. They stood before that group of learned men with great boldness. Meaning, freedom of speech. No fear at all. They told that group of men that there was salvation in no other, but only in ^{the} ~~the~~ name of Jesus Christ. Not salvation in the priesthood...not salvation in the Sanhedrin....not salvation through the nation....But salvation was only in Jesus...

The Bible says that when those educated men/~~men~~/ saw the boldness of Peter and John they concluded one thing: ^{That} THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS.. For ^{no} ~~one~~ man had ever spoken like that...No man ever had authority like he did.. Not even the scribes and Pharisees..

Don't you think it is about time that you spent some time with Jesus? Start by making a new commitment to Christ?

You say, what do you mean? Oh, I know what Satan's plan is. Satan's plan is to get you away from the Word of God. To work on a believer to the point that he loses his joy. And he is unhappy inside. He has a mess of problems in his life. And instead of going to the word to listen to the voice of Jesus, ~~to~~ spend time alone with God, he goes to some human agent...

He goes to people and seeks their advise...He tries to work himself out of the problem. He does everything he can and he gets more furstrated. The joy is fulfilled when you are setting at the feet of Jesus.

Psalms ¹⁶11:11 says "in thy presence is fulness of Joy. And at ~~thy~~ thy right hand is pleasures for evermore."

And notice the warning.....Vs 36 "He who does not obey the son ~~vs 36~~ shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Let us close in prayer

And dear friend, ~~I hope that~~ if you have never received Jesus as your Savior, then I hope you will believe on him today. I hope you will ask him to forgive your sins, and with your mouth you will confess him as Lord.