



Series: SEEING IS BELIEVING
(Book Study Gospel of John)

Christ First Church
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Sermon 13: "ABOVE ALL"
(John 3:22-36)

September 20, 2020

INTRO: If you have it available, turn in your John journal to John 3. Today, we will be looking at verses 22-36. If you do not have a John Journal, turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to John 3 verse 22.

It's good to be back in John's Gospel. We took three weeks off from our study after spending 4 weeks in the first 21 verses of this great chapter. Today, is sermon 13 in our exegetical study of the gospel. The title of our series is, "Seeing Is Believing", An Up-Close Look at the Gospel of John.

We have been moving at an intentionally slow pace through the book, but today I hope to finish up with chapter 3. To have any chance for that, we need to dive in. Today's sermon title is ABOVE ALL. Notice...

1) THE DILEMMA: vv 22-26 *"After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison). 25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 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 is baptizing, and all are going to him."*

Up to this point, John the Baptizer had been making quite a splash, so to speak. He was the talk of the town. Everyone had heard about this wild man who wore a camel's hide, ate locust (That's a bug) dipped in honey, and preached repentance of sin. And not only had everyone heard of him, but he had also amassed quite a following. He's baptizing people left and right.

You will remember from chapter 1 that John the Baptist is kin to Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, John's mother, were cousins. John is about 6 months older than Jesus. John also began his ministry some time before Jesus did His. According to John, he had a very simple calling, PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD. Over and over again he was asked, are you the Christ, the Messiah? To which he always replied, I am not... but He's coming, you better get ready!

Let's look at these verses a moment. v 22 *"After this..."* John uses this time phrase frequently, but usually without an indication of the length of time between the previous and present event. So what's he speaking of here? "After this", after Jesus cleansed the Temple, after the miracles, and finally the nighttime discussion with Nicodemus. After those things which took place in Jerusalem. Jesus and His followers have been in the City of Jerusalem for a little while but v 22 says, *"After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing."*

I) THE DILEMMA: vv 22-26 CONTINUED "...and was baptizing." This seems to be a very unique experience for Jesus and His disciples. As a matter of fact, this is the only reference in scripture where His disciples baptized at all. The next chapter over, John 4, tells us in vv 1-2, that Jesus wasn't actually doing the baptizing, His disciples were. The picture is, that Jesus was preaching repentance, and the gospel of the Kingdom, and people were believing. And as they believed, Jesus directed them to His disciples who were baptizing those who believed. What an incredible site it must have been! Chapter 4, verse one said that He was baptizing more disciples than John, the guy with the nickname, baptizer. WOW!

V 23-24 "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison). So John and Jesus, and their disciples, are preaching and teaching, thrashing and splashing, and making quite the scene. It was bound to get the attention of the Jewish elite...

V 25-26 "Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 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 is baptizing, and all are going to him."

It appears that this religious Jew has pitted John's disciples against Jesus and His disciples. You can always count on some religious busy body to cause trouble. It's been happening for years.

Here's THE DILEMMA, John's disciples aren't privy to what John has known for a long time, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. In their mind, John's the Baptizer! He's the man! If there's any baptizing to be done, we'll take care of it. It's almost a turf war! But John has been waiting for this day. Notice...

II) THE DECISION: vv 27-30 "John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

John the Baptist knew the truth that James declared in **James 1:17** "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow"

Then John explains to his disciples, I'm not THE GUY! I'm just a friend of THE GUY! I love how he explains that although the friend of the bridegroom isn't the one actually getting the bride, still a true friend is joyful for the groom. Then John says at the end of v 29, "Therefore this joy of mine is now complete." Joy is the Greek word Chara. It describes a feeling of great pleasure, of inner gladness. Joy is an emotion evoked by a sense of well-being. It is a deep feeling of happiness and contentment. And John said that his was "complete". "Complete" is the Greek word "Pleroo" and it means to be filled to the brim!

John's disciples were questioning him, the people were leaving him for Jesus, his ministry was coming to an end, and yet his JOY WAS COMPLETE, full to the top!

I) THE DILEMMA: vv 22-26

II) THE DECISION: vv 27-30 CONTINUED And it's in this state of contentment, that John comes to this DECISION, v 30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."

A W Tozer - John condensed into that one final sentence the secret of his own spiritual greatness: "Jesus must increase, but I must decrease."

The key word in this verse is the word MUST. If we are to live a peaceful life of poise and contentment, Jesus MUST increase, but at the same time I MUST decrease! Both words, increase and decrease are in the present tense, many this is a continual action!

This was the greatest DECISION John could have made. And it's the greatest decision we'll ever make also!

How can we decrease, and allow God to increase in our lives? First, we MUST put Him first in all things! Secondly, we MUST honor Him above anything else in our lives!

We cannot tend to our flesh and selfish desires, and expect God to INCREASE in our lives. He increases when we focus our attention and affections on Him! The church has capitulated to the selfish desires and ideologies of the world. The modern church has the same entitled attitude that the world has. But for Christ to INCREASE, we MUST DECREASE!

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Colossians 3:1-4 "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Paul is saying there's a litmus test for discerning whether or not you have been raised with Christ. To be raised with Christ, requires first, that we die to ourselves. This is a statement of salvation. Being raised with Christ is the same as being saved. Paul says, IF you want to know if you are saved, take this test. Do you actively SEEK the things that are above? That's where Christ is! Is your mind SET on things above, or does your mind live in this world? You are supposed to be dead to the world. And if you are, you have a new life in Christ!

Is that true of you? Would you rather spend time in the world—at the lake, in the woods, goofing off—than you would in church—worshipping, praying, putting God first? Would you rather watch TV than to read your Bible? Can you be honest with yourself and say, I do put God first in my life! If you can't, you need a heart check up!

Romans 8:5 "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

I) THE DILEMMA: vv 22-26

II) THE DECISION: vv 27-30 CONTINUED John made THE DECISION in the present tense, "He *MUST* increase (continually) and I *MUST* (continually) decrease." It is an everyday decision! You may have, at one time, lived your life putting God first, but what about now?

Now Notice...

III) THE DECLARATION: vv 31-36 "He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

V 31 "He who comes from above is above all..." What a statement! Is Jesus the man, or is there another? Who else can say he is from above? This settles the argument about who's in control. This is simple math, $2+2=4!$ Since Jesus is from above, He is above! He is above all others!

Listen, Jesus is the Savior of the world! If you desire to be BORN AGAIN (Gr. Ānōthen: meaning, from above; of things which come from heaven or God), if you desire to be born from above, you must believe in the one who is from above!

Vv 35-36 "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

CONCLUSION: So they question today is, do you believe in Jesus as the Son of God? Have you trusted Him to the point you have cast your affections toward Him? Has the Spirit of God revealed Christ to you, meaning, do you have faith to believe in Him as the Savior of the world, and your Savior? If so, commit to follow Jesus today!