

“Bowing Before Christ”  
John 1:24-27  
(Preached at Trinity, October 19, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. John the Baptist was a remarkable individual.
  - A. He was one of the few consecrated from his mother's womb. Even in the womb he recognized the glory of Christ.  
**Luke 1:41-44 NAS** - "And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women *are* you, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> "And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy."
  - B. He was chosen and raised up to announce the arrival of the Christ.  
**John 1:23 NAS** - "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."
  - C. He carried out his task with boldness and singlemindedness.  
In Matthew's Gospel we find Jesus making a high commendation of John.  
**Matthew 11:11 NAU** - "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
2. John was growing in popularity. He had multitudes coming to him. He was attracting many disciples. He was one of the greatest among the prophets.  
And yet, the greatest of men are insignificant as they stand before God. The wise man humbly bows.  
John reveals his reverence for Christ in **Verses 26-27**  
**John 1:26-27 NAU** - "John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know. <sup>27</sup> "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."
3. In the previous verses the Pharisees had sent an envoy to John asking him regarding his identity. "Who are you?"  
John responded to their questions, "I am not the Christ. I am not Elijah, nor am I the Prophet."
4. This frustrated the ones sent by the Pharisees and they responded:  
**John 1:25 NAU** - "They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

5. They were puzzled by John's baptism. Baptism was not new to the Jews. It was standard practice to baptize Gentile proselytes who converted to Judaism. Both men and women were baptized and the men were circumcised. It was a ceremonial cleansing of the uncleanness of the Gentile.
- But John was baptizing Jews who were already God's people. This was most offensive to the Jews. It was widely believed that there would be baptism when the messianic age dawned. But John removed this possibility as we read in **Verse 20**
- "And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."
6. So we can understand their confused question in **Verse 25**
- "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"
7. John's response declares a couple important truths regarding Jesus.
- First, John implies that his baptism was of a different type. He declares, "I baptize in water." The implication is that the baptism of Jesus was not a baptism of water. And indeed it was not.
- Matthew 3:11 NAU** - "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."
- A. John's baptism was a testimony to the work of Christ. The Kingdom of God was arriving in all its brilliance. It is a Kingdom of holiness. Our only proper response is to turn away from sin in repentance.
1. John's water baptism was a baptism of repentance. Confessing their sin, they were baptized in the Jordan. It was a commitment to follow the Law in anticipation of the arrival of the Messiah.
  2. John's baptism was different from our Christian Baptism. Christian baptism is testimony to our conversion – of our union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It testifies to our cleansing through the sacrificial atonement of Christ. We are raised to new life through the power of the resurrection.
  3. John's baptism was meant as preparatory for the coming of the Messiah.
- B. Christ's work is infinitely greater
1. Jesus' baptism is the efficient work of salvation to which water baptism points. It is effectual and sure
  2. It includes the work of regeneration
- John 3:5-7 NAU** - "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"
3. The Baptism of Christ is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is the mighty work of God whereby we become partakers of Christ. It is the act of God whereby we are immersed into Christ.
- C. What is meant by the words: "and with fire"
1. Fire could point to Pentecost
- Acts 2:3 NAU** - "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them."

2. More likely, fire points to judgment.  
**Matthew 3:11-12 NAU** - "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup> "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."  
**Luke 12:49 NAU** - "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"
3. We will either bow before Christ as King or suffer His wrath and condemnation.  
**Psalm 2:12 NAU** - "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"
8. John's work was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. John recognized that there is none greater. He was fully prepared to humble himself before the King of kings.  
**John 1:27 NAU** - "*It is* He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."
9. As we stand before Christ we see our own unworthiness.
  - a. We are unworthy to even untie His shoes  
 In order to untie another person's shoes what position must you take? It demands that you kneel before him. John says he's not even worthy to bow before Christ. Our face planted firmly in the dirt is not low enough.
  - b. Our best labors for Him are less than He is due  
**Luke 17:10 NAU** - "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'"
- I. The great tragedy of humanity is the deception of self-importance
  - A. In our sin we see ourselves as the greatest being in the universe
    1. We seek to elevate ourselves above other men
      - a. We love to talk about ourselves. We boast of our accomplishments, our possessions, our families. The motive in this is that others might glory in us.
      - b. When we are sad we want the world to know. When we are sick we put it on display. We crave the attention.
    2. It is all a delusion. We boast of greatness, but are helpless before the mighty hand of God. We boast of our greatness trying to conceal the reality that we are but dust. The greatest and wealthiest still get sick and die. They tremble before the winds of a tornado, earthquakes and floods.
  - B. The greatest manifestation of the delusion of greatness is that men will not bow before God.
    1. They would rather believe the lie of evolution than bow before the Creator
    2. They boldly proclaim the right to take a life in abortion.
    3. They deny God's creation of male and female and the ordinance of marriage.
    4. They scoff at God's Law
    5. They are blind to the inevitable outcome  
 Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord

## II. Great men are humbled before Christ

### A. John declared of Jesus in **Verse 27** –

"the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie"

1. Jesus called John a great man but John made no claim to greatness. His ambition was to point men to Christ. His work was to prepare the way for Christ.

**John 1:23 NAS** - "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

2. He wanted every eye to be directed towards Christ. His goal was to bow before Christ as King.

"the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

3. The thong was the strap that held the sandal to the foot. It was customarily untied by a servant. Disciples often did various tasks for their teachers but this wasn't one of them.

"There is a Rabbinic saying (in its present form dating from A.D. 250, but probably much older) 'Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher except the loosing of his sandal-thong.'"<sup>1</sup>

4. It was a lowly task; the task of a slave.  
John is declaring himself less than a servant.
5. As John spoke of Jesus he wanted every eye to be on Him.  
The Psalmist expressed the same heart in Psalm 115

**Psalms 115:1 KJV** - "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory"

### B. The nature of entering into our Lord's Kingdom is to come to the end of ourselves

1. The lost man is naturally proud – he always focuses upon himself
2. Coming to Christ demands the end of self that Christ might reign supreme  
**Matthew 16:24 NAU** - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."
3. Our Lord's servants are comforted by His greatness  
John saw Jesus as mighty in power.

**Mark 1:6-7 NAU** - "John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals."

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, Leon. (1971). *The Gospel According to John*. (The New International Commentary) (p. 141). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing.

**Conclusion:**

1. Jesus Christ was a human being but there is an infinite difference between Him and us. It is the difference between the infinite and the finite, between the eternal and the temporal. **John 1:14 NAU** - "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."
2. As we stand before Him we appear tiny and small. Yet, through Him we are exalted and lifted up. He gives more grace to the humble.
3. We labor and serve but the fruit of our labors are in His hands. In addition, all of our work points to Him – He is the focus. John’s purpose was to point men to Christ. That is also our purpose. All that we do is of Him, by Him, and through Him – to Him be all glory and honor.
4. James Montgomery Boice wrote: “If we are to witness for Jesus Christ, we must first of all forget ourselves—our likes, our dislikes, our needs, our personal interests, our free time, even at times our work or our ambitions. We must think first of the other person and of his need for the Savior.<sup>2</sup>
5. We must bow before Christ as a lowly slave—but oh what a glorious Master.

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<sup>2</sup> Boice, J. M. (2005). *The Gospel of John: an expositional commentary* (p. 108). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.