

All Glory Be to Christ

John 3:22-30

As we continue our worship by focusing our minds on the word of God, I would invite you to open your Bible with me to John 3 for this message entitled, “All Glory Be to Christ.” Our text for today is John 3:22-30 and in this text we see the humility of John the Baptist as his ministry begins to fade into the shadows as Jesus the Christ the Son of God rises. The primary lesson for you and me to draw from this passage is that our place in the kingdom of God is determined by the Lord. And when he chooses to reduce our role for the sake of accomplishing his greater purposes, rather than being jealous and resentful, we should give all glory to Christ.

Follow along as I read John 3:22-30

The limelight is an enticing place to be. The idol factory, known as the human heart, which collectively creates a culture, has always been prone to elevate certain individuals to a status that we would call being a celebrity. That simply means that someone is well known. They are a household name. And by virtue of being well known their lives garner a great amount of attention—whether they want it or not.

We see this in every sphere of society—there are world-renowned actors and musicians whose fame transcends land and culture and language. But every corner of society, every sub-culture, every group that can be identified as a group has their own celebrities—names and faces that are well-known and venerated within that group. This includes the church of Jesus Christ as well.

This dynamic puts on display the sinful human heart. We were once under the condemnation of God the Father, destined to receive his just wrath forever, but who were rescued and redeemed by the Son of God who gave his life to pay the penalty sinners deserve and purchase a people for his own possession, transforming them to present them as his bride in purity and righteousness, that he might receive the glory and honor due to him as the magnificent Savior forever and ever. All glory should go to Christ, and yet the very people he redeems venerate and divide themselves up over which heralds of this great gospel they prefer.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians to set them straight on a variety of issues, one of the first issues he addressed was their propensity to fight over their favorite apostolic leaders. He writes this in 1 Corinthians 1, “For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Then his mind goes down a glorious Spirit-inspired rabbit trail, but he wanders back around to this issue in chapter 3 saying, “For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”

Paul has more to say on this topic which you can read on your own, but for our purposes I want to highlight that last statement, “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” In other words, those whom God uses to accomplish his purposes are nothing, only God is something.

There’s nothing we can do about celebrity culture in the church because we can’t control how other people think and what they do. But we can examine our own hearts and be mindful of the two temptations that rise up in our own hearts.

First, all of us are tempted to idolize another person. We are tempted to give our hearts to someone whose abilities draw us to want to consume as much of what they produce as possible such that we will over-emphasize their strengths and minimize to obscurity their weaknesses. We will turn off our discernment and accept everything they say as inerrant. Should anyone disagree with that teacher we will defend them to the end. We are fast friends with others who follow that teacher and think less of those who don’t.

And when we encounter someone who’s never heard of that teacher, we evangelize them and urge them to invite that teacher into their heart by means of consuming that teacher’s books or messages.

Some are so given over to such idolatry that should that teacher fall into some public scandal, they will question their own Christian faith. This idolatry shows that we glorify servants of Christ when we should only glorify Christ.

The second temptation is that all who serve Christ in any capacity are tempted to elevate ourselves above being slaves of Christ. And you know that's happened in your own heart when you have a firm grip on your ministry such that you refuse to let it go. Or you get jealous and resentful when someone gets more attention or opportunities than you. Or you feel threatened by those more gifted than you.

Or you convince yourself that God needs you to accomplish his purposes in that ministry. Or when your ministry comes to an end—for whatever reason— you feel as though you've lost your identity so you are depressed or angry. This is what happens when we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; when we are more interested in our own glory than in the glory of Christ.

As the apostle John thought through what to include in his Gospel to set forth his case that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God so that you might believe and have life in his name, the Holy Spirit directed him to include one more section on John the Baptist. Why? Well, because even though John wrote decades after Jesus had died and risen and ascended into heaven, there were still people who were disciples of John the Baptist.

In chapter one we learned that John's wildly popular ministry reached its apex when Jesus came on the scene and John pointed to him and declared, "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. . . . This is the Son of God." And as much as John pointed people to Jesus as the Messiah, there were still people—even as we see in our text—who had not yet transferred their allegiance to Jesus. That remained true for years and decades and beyond. So John includes this section to all who were still followers of John to declare to them John's final witness testimony of how they should think about him in comparison to Jesus.

To help us as we consider this text, for our outline we're going to walk through this text under the following headings—the setting, the argument, the lesson, the illustration, and the application. Let's begin with the setting.

Setting (vs. 22-24)

LOOK at vs. 22-24. . . .

Notice that it begins with the words “after this.” This clearly refers to the time Jesus spent in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus would have been there for the better part of a week, and it was a busy week. He began the week causing quite the stir by clearing out the sellers of animals and money changers from the temple. He spent most of the week teaching and performing miracles. He then celebrated the Passover, and either before or after the Passover he had the interaction with Nicodemus that we studied in vs. 1-21.

After this busy week Jesus and his small band of disciples start to head back toward Galilee. But before they get there, he makes a stop to do some baptizing. Our text says, “After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside.” Your Bible might say the “land of Judea,” which would be a more literal rendering.

Jerusalem is in the land of Judea—Judea being the region of Israel that was allotted to the tribe of Judah. So by saying they went from Jerusalem, which again is in the land of Judea, to the land or region of Judea, it seems that John means the outer edges of Judea—or the countryside.

Since he was aiming to go north to Galilee, most likely this was on the eastern side which ran along the Jordan River, which was the easiest way to travel north. Jesus and his disciples would not have been alone as they travelled. There were likely many people returning to Galilee and other places after the Passover. So when they reached a place of water, Jesus decided to stop and baptize people.

Remember that 2:23 says. . . . As people were streaming out of Jerusalem, they would have been eager to be baptized in light of the Messiah’s arrival. Word had spread about John the Baptist and his declaration that the Messiah who was coming is now here. And those in Jerusalem were hearing from the Messiah himself and seeing him perform signs.

Why were they being baptized? Because this is what God’s prophet—John the Baptist—commanded the people to do. And Jesus’ early preaching was consistent

with John's. Matthew 3:2 tells us the essence of John's preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And then vs. 5-6 tells us the response to his preaching, "Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Then when Jesus started preaching, Matthew and Mark tell us his message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—exactly what John preached.

The baptism people received was not what we know as Christian baptism where we symbolize the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. The baptism of John and Jesus symbolized the washing from sin and turning of hearts to the Lord in preparation for the Messiah's kingdom.

Now if you look at the end of vs. 22, by saying "he remained there with them and was baptizing," it sounds like Jesus was doing the baptizing. But John clarifies this point in 4:1-2. LOOK there. . . .

Why didn't Jesus personally baptize anyone? We don't know for certain, but I believe it's because he knew the heart of man. Can you imagine how people would take pride in the fact that Jesus baptized them? *I was baptized by a disciple of John! I was baptized by John! Oh yeah? I was baptized by a disciple of Jesus! You think that's good, I was baptized by Jesus himself!* There are many today who think it something special to be baptized in the Jordan River. Can you imagine how great a temptation it would be to be filled with pride if Jesus baptized you? Jesus knows mankind too well to baptize anyone, so he has his disciples do it.

LOOK at vs. 23. . . . We don't know for certain where either of these cities are, but archeologist's best guess is that Aenon and Salim are above the north-east corner of Samaria, not far from the west bank of the Jordan River. Whether John celebrated the Passover, we don't know, but he and his disciples had at some point moved from where they he had been further south on Jordan River to this area.

Now vs. 24 states a rather obvious fact that John the Baptist had not yet been put in prison. He couldn't well be baptizing if he was locked up in prison, so why does John tell us this? It's likely because the other Gospels, which were written first, seem to imply that John was arrested very soon after Jesus' baptism and Jesus' 40 days in

the wilderness. Listen to how tightly Mark puts it in Mark 1:13-14, “And [Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.”

Matthew does the same in his Gospel. So if you’ve read the other Gospels, and now you read John who describes that after his wilderness temptations, Jesus’ attended a wedding in Cana of Galilee, spent a few days in Capernaum, and then went to Jerusalem for Passover, you’re thinking that John had long since been arrested. But the simple reality is the other Gospels skipped a lot of detail of Jesus’ ministry. So there was a time when the ministries of John and Jesus ran parallel to each other. But it wasn’t long, and that’s what the rest of this passage tells us.

So here we have Jesus and his disciples baptizing on the edge of Judea, and John and his disciples baptizing further north. This is the setting, which brings us to the argument.

Argument (vs. 25-26)

LOOK at vs. 25-26. . . .

The word “discussion” here is too tame. Of the seven times this word is used in the New Testament, it’s most often translated as debate or controversy. A squabble arose, an argument erupted, a theological debate ensued. And much to our disappointment the apostle John tells us next to nothing about it. He only gives us the participants and a one-word description of the topic.

He says here that the people arguing were John’s disciples and a Jew. This is peculiar way to describe the people involved in this argument because John’s disciples were Jews—as were majority of people in Israel. This at least tells us that John’s disciples were not arguing with a Gentile, nor were they arguing with a Samaritan. In this Gospel we often hear John using “Jews”, plural, to refer to the religious leaders who were antagonistic toward Jesus, but here these disciples of John are arguing with a Jew, singular.

What does this mean? This argument is an argument with your average person on the street. This was not an argument with religious leaders or political leaders. So whatever the argument was about, it wasn't a topic that only concernedly the theologically trained.

What was that topic? John says there at the end of vs. 25 that it was over purification. Now this could mean all kinds of things. The Mosaic Law had many regulations regarding purifying objects and individuals to ensure ritual cleanness for proper worship. Beyond that, Israel had developed various traditions and practices related to cleansing, such as washing hands before meals.

And then there's John's Baptism which was a baptism of repentance representing cleansing from sin in preparation for the coming Messiah. So what aspect of purification were they debating? Well, perhaps vs. 26 can give us a clue. LOOK at it.
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Most interpreters treat vs. 25 and vs. 26 as completely unrelated. But given the intense purposefulness of John's Gospel, that seems unlikely. Especially since vs. 26 begins, just as the original Greek does, with the word "and." In other words, John attaches vs. 26 to vs. 25. So it's up to the reader to discern the connection.

Whatever their argument was, they come to John because they consider him to be a respected teacher—that's what Rabbi means—and they want to get his answer to the question they've been discussing. And the way they present the dilemma is to point out that that Jesus is baptizing and "all" they say, are going to him. What does that mean? It means that people are choosing not to be baptized by John.

Think about this: John is the first true prophet of God in four hundred years. While we don't know when he began his ministry, it does not seem like it was all that long ago—probably less than five years, maybe less than two or three. During that time tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people were coming to him to be baptized and hear him preach.

And now, just a short time after he began his ministry, the crowds were thinning out considerably and there was less interest in his preaching. As a prophet of God, he was declaring a message from God and commanding the people to repent and be

baptized. But now the people were turning away from him and starting to follow someone else.

As a devoted follower of John, this was deeply concerning to his disciples. They were zealous for God and righteousness. They were ready to receive the coming kingdom of God. And maybe, just maybe, if they were anything like Jesus' disciples, maybe they perceived that being John's disciples they would be the first in line and have a higher place in the kingdom. But now they see their leader, the prophet John, having a diminished ministry.

We can't be certain, but based on what they said to John, perhaps the argument they had with the Jew was over whether it was necessary to be baptized by John, or whether being baptized by Jesus was an acceptable way to obey God's command. Maybe the Jew was walking by where they were and John's disciples called out to him urging him to repent and be baptized and the man responded, "Thanks, but I've already been baptized by Jesus." To which the disciples responded, "But John is God's prophet and you must be baptized by him." They argue for a bit and the disciples come to John, "Look! Jesus is baptizing and all are going to him!" As if to say, what are you going to do about this, John?

Though we can't be completely certain, it seems that Jesus was baptizing too far south for John and disciples to physically see them. So it may be that many were passing by John and his disciples having just been baptized by Jesus the day or two before. Whatever the case, these loyal disciples of John were deeply concerned that John's ministry was not being taken seriously and that his influence was waning.

That brings us to the lesson.

Lesson (vs. 27-28)

LOOK at vs. 27-28. . . .

In this simple statement John models for us how our view of God is the most important thing about us. His response to what's going on is centered around God and his purposes. He has no interest in preserving his popularity or having a tight

grip around his ministry. He is concerned with only one thing: fulfilling God's purpose for his life.

It's critical that you and I to set this foundation stone in our lives. LOOK again at the God-centered principle John teaches in vs. 27. . . .

The translation is good but the original is quite emphatic. "No one has the ability to receive not one thing." What does this mean? It simply means this: you and I are such dependent creatures that we cannot do the most basic thing for ourselves. If our lives depended on our ability to do anything on our own, we would die instantly. We are—you have to understand this—you and I are just as dependent as a newborn baby.

What can a newborn baby do to care and provide for itself? Nothing. It can't clean itself, it can't change itself, it can't feed itself, and it can't tell anyone what its needs are. A newborn baby in any position is like a turtle turned over on its back—it can't move no matter how much it flails. A newborn baby is utterly dependent on others for its survival.

Perhaps you're thinking, "What do you mean I'm as dependent as a newborn baby? I can walk and talk and feed myself and change myself and clean myself and work and earn a living. I'm not dependent like a newborn baby!" Praise the Lord that you can do those things, but consider this: do you keep your heart beating? Do you keep your lungs breathing? Do you command your blood to flow and be refreshed with oxygen and carry it throughout your body? Do you direct the synapses in your brain to fire carrying the messages from your brain to your body? Do you keep your memory logs in their proper order?

With every step you take do you consciously control your muscles so they engage and disengage just right to make smooth movements? Do you tell your stomach how to filter the food you eat and split the molecules to ensure that the nutrients are absorbed and the waste is passed along? We could go on. Even if you had the ability to sustain your own life and by your sheer will cause your body to function, you would still be utterly dependent.

Did you decide when in history to be born? Did you determine the family into which you were born? Did you decide how you would be educated as a child? Did you give yourself your personality or upon salvation determine which spiritual gifts you would have? Can you control what employment or ministry opportunities come your way, and guarantee you get the ones you want? Can you ensure that people respond to the words you say the way you think they should, or take the actions you think they ought to take?

Your life—from your very physiological functioning to the circumstances and relationships and opportunities—are not of your own ability to determine. They are all from God in heaven. “No one has the ability to receive not one thing, unless it is given him from heaven.”

There is nothing you have, there is nothing you are, there is nothing you’ve accomplished which was not given to you. Your life, your strength, your intellect, your family, your opportunities, your accomplishments, your ministry—it all comes from the Lord, the sovereign king of heaven and giver of all things, even as James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

Do you serve in as a greeter in the church? That is a gift from the Lord. Do you serve in the nursery? That is a gift from the Lord. Do you teach three year olds who can barely sit still and you’re not sure if they understand what you say? That is a gift from the Lord. Do you teach teenagers? That is a gift from the Lord.

Do you serve the body by cleaning or working on the facility? That is a gift from the Lord. Do you serve as a small group leader or a Growing Disciples teacher or a ministry leader or a deacon or an elder? That is a gift from the Lord.

God owes us nothing, and we have earned and deserve nothing. All that we are and all that we do is a gift from the Lord. This means that when our ministry changes, when our position is given to someone else, when someone more gifted rises to prominence, or when our ministry comes to an end, we can only say with Job, “The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

John understood his role was narrow and temporary. He had been given an assignment from the Lord, and that assignment did not include ever-increasing popularity. LOOK again at vs. 28. . . . He reminds his disciples that he has been clear and consistent in his preaching that he is not the Messiah. He is not the one to whom the people should give their allegiance. His role was simply to prepare the people for the arrival of the Messiah.

The role of John the Baptist was really the role of every follower of Christ—to point to Jesus and declare, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Whatever you and I do to serve the Lord, directly or indirectly it would be travesty if we got the idea in our head and in any way communicated to others, “It’s all about me! This is my ministry! I’m in charge. Everyone has to follow me!” Oh no, we are stewards, and there’s nothing more wretched than a steward who thinks himself to be the king.

Whether you vacuum after church or you preach from the pulpit, or anything in between, we are all slaves of Christ and stewards of his gifts. Sometimes he gives us opportunities to serve him in ways that excite us; other times he gives us opportunities to serve him in ways that don’t excite us. But what is required of stewards, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, is that they be found faithful. John the Baptist was a faithful steward. And because he understood the stewardship entrusted to him, he was not bothered that many were going to Jesus. In fact, he was excited.

To emphasize this lesson and his own personal disposition, John moves from the lesson to the illustration.

Illustration (vs. 29)

LOOK at vs. 29. . . .

This is a perfect illustration that has meaning even beyond what John the Baptist understood. But before your mind goes to the apostolic teaching that the church is the bride of Christ, remember that John the Baptist knows nothing about the church. He’ll be in heaven before Jesus teaches about the church, and certainly before the church is born in Acts 2. So in his mind, he’s simply using a crystal clear

illustration to make his point, but as was often the case with the prophets, they often spoke truths they themselves didn't fully understand.

But let's begin with John's intended meaning. He begins with the obvious. At a wedding, the bride belongs to the bridegroom. Everybody at the wedding, including the wedding party, understands the primacy and exclusivity of the relationship between the bride and the bridegroom. For a friend to stand with them as a third person in the relationship, or worse, to try take the bride from the bridegroom, would be unthinkable. It would bring shame upon himself, and if he were successful it would bring shame upon both families.

The Book of Common Prayer, which contains the traditional liturgies that Christians have used for centuries, contains these familiar words as part of the marriage ceremony: "Should anyone present know of any reason that this couple should not be joined in holy matrimony, speak now or forever hold your peace." To the ancient Jews who practiced arranged marriages, to say that at a wedding would be outrageous. First of all, no one but the parents have a say in the marriage of their children. And second, by the time of the wedding, the couple had already been legally betrothed. So John asserts the obvious truth that at the wedding, the bride belongs to the bridegroom which no one could take from him.

Now we have very little information about what a wedding would entail in the first century, but a parable Jesus tells in Matthew 25 indicates that the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride and bring her in something like a parade to his own home for the celebration. The friend of the bridegroom may well have been the one responsible to make arrangements for the celebration, so he would be waiting for the groom to arrive, listening for his voice announcing his arrival.

The friend of the bridegroom's job is singular, it's privileged, and it's exciting. His job is to set the celebratory tone of the wedding in demonstrating the joy and delight of seeing his friend and his friend's bride arriving together. And as the friend observes the marriage being finalized, he rejoices with exceeding joy at the blessing of God upon his friend.

How shameful would it be if everyone is celebrating the marriage and the best man is off in the corner sulking. And when asked what's wrong, he said, "Why does he

get all the attention?” Oh what a fool he would be! Yet this is how John’s disciples felt. They took offense on behalf of the friend of the bridegroom when they should have been celebrating!

But not John. He took no offense. He says there at the end, “Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.” His eyes were fixated on fulfilling his mission. Therefore his heart was filled with joy at the coming of Jesus. The more people that went to Jesus the more successful John’s ministry was. As long as people were still following John while Jesus walked around Israel, John’s ministry was incomplete. His mission was to work himself out of a ministry—to point people to Jesus so that they would stop following John and instead follow Jesus.

Now in this illustration John refers to himself as the friend of the bridegroom. But let’s take it a step further based on what later Scripture reveals.

What John didn’t know is that marriage is more than a helpful illustration to make his point. God designed marriage as a precursor, a shadow, a forerunner, if you will, to the relationship between Jesus the Christ and his people, the church. Just as John was the forerunner, preparing people for and then pointing to Jesus, so marriage is meant to help us understand and point to Jesus.

Keep your finger here and turn over to Ephesians 5 with me. Ephesians 5:22-33 is the most extensive passage that teaches this, but it’s not the only one. Follow along as I read Ephesians 5:22-33. . . .

With Jesus as the husband, you and I are the wife in this relationship. And did you catch what our responsibility is? It is to submit to Christ in everything. And did you notice what makes submitting to Christ in everything so wonderful? He loves us, He gave himself for us, he forgives us, he cares for us as he cares for himself, he nourishes us, he cherishes us, he thinks of us as his own.

You know what that means? It means that when he grants us a ministry, it is perfectly suited for our good and his glory. And when he takes ministry away, he does it for our good and his glory. Because he only does what is good for us.

Our all-knowing, all-wise, all-loving bridegroom knows what is best. He is the perfect leader. So we can trust that if he chooses to bless someone else in a way that our own ministry is diminished, we can rejoice. If he chooses to take ministry off our plate for whatever reason, we can rejoice.

We've walked through this passage looking at the setting, the argument, the lesson, and the illustration. We come now to the application.

Application (vs. 30)

LOOK at vs. 30. . . .

After declaring the truth that we can receive nothing unless it is given by God, and the truth that the people of God ought to follow the Messiah not him, John's application is that Christ must increase—he must become greater, more important, his ministry must grow, and his influence multiply; while John decreases—he must diminish in importance, his ministry must fade, he influence wane.

“He must increase but I must decrease” could be more literally translated, “It is necessary for that one—him—to increase, but for me to decrease.” It's not that this should happen or that it would be good for him to increase. No, he ought to increase. It is necessary that I decrease. This must happen. Because of who he is and who I am, this is required. This is of absolute necessity that he increase and I decrease. It cannot be any other way.

To borrow a term from AW Tozer, this is “graduate level grace.” To have the humility to step aside after enjoying such a profound and popular ministry and let all the attention go to someone else—even Christ himself—is only possible by the grace of God shaping John's heart.

John was born for this ministry. His ministry was prophesied in Isaiah 40 and Malachi 4. His birth and life purpose was promised by an angel to his parents. Jesus himself would say of John, “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John.” He was born when his parents were old, and once they died he lived his life wandering in the wilderness until the Spirit led him to begin preaching and

baptizing. His whole life led up to a ministry that exploded in popularity. But now just one or two or three years later it was fading to nothing.

And John's mindset is, "That's the way it should be." And why should it be this way? "Because this is what God ordained for me." Beloved, the rise and fall of your ministry is determined in heaven. This doesn't just apply to prophets or apostles or pastors. This applies to all of us who serve the Lord in any capacity. Whatever you do, whatever position you hold in the life the church, whatever gifts you have, we must all hold our ministry with an open hand. And our goal should be to see Christ glorified.

Whatever opportunities you have were given to you from heaven so that all glory would be to Christ. Whatever gifts and abilities you have were given to you from heaven so that all glory would be to Christ. Whatever apparent success you experience comes from heaven so that all glory would be to Christ.

And if our ministry is taken away, we can rejoice because it's all about Christ and not us. And when we reach the limit of our gifts, or our abilities diminish, we can rejoice because it's all about Christ and not us. And when the success we experienced before vanishes and we don't see any fruit, we can rejoice because it's all about Christ and not us.

For the redeemed servant of Christ our attitude should be that of the psalmist, in Psalm 84:10, "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is no position too low, no outpost too far, no task too difficult, and no recognition too little. Because "from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever, amen" (Romans 11:36).

We are his slaves and stewards of his kingdom. So Jesus tells us in Luke 17:10, "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" That should be our attitude knowing that the Master we serve will reward his faithful stewards one day saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Questions:

1. Was there anything from this week's message that ministered to your soul?
2. Were there any questions you had from the message or passage?
3. What does this passage show about what John the Baptist's disciples thought about him?
4. What does this passage show about John the Baptist and Jesus' relationship with one another?
5. What was the point John the Baptist was trying to make with the illustration of the bridegroom?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9. How do these passages connect?
7. How do we battle jealousy when another's ministry is flourishing?
8. How do we battle pride when our ministry is flourishing?