

Decrease That He May Increase

John 3:22-36

I. Intro

II. *John 3:22-36*

- A. In this passage we see a war of the will. It looks like a simple enough exchange, not uncommon from anything we might see on a daily basis
 - 1. But the essence of it is this: flesh vs Spirit
- B. V22, Jesus is taking center stage more and more
 - 1. The leadership has noticed him; people are noticing him;
- C. V23, John is there too, for now...
- D. V24, John eventually is arrested and beheaded for standing up for his faith and standing against sexual sin of the country's leadership
- E. V25, We don't know the nature of the debate, but they start to debate
- F. V26, They are obviously a little rubbed the wrong way b/c they leave the debate and stir the pot w/ John
 - 1. Isn't that what people do? You had a bad day and it just makes you feel a little better if you go and make someone else's day bad too
 - 2. Gossip a little, complain a little, turn on the news and bash every politician you disagree with. Spread the gloom around. That's what they do.
 - 3. They aren't thinking straight, they are doing whatever comes naturally, walking in the flesh - and what does the flesh beget (v6)? Flesh.
- G. V27, Will John fall into it? No, he stands firm: "What do I have that wasn't given to me? Did I do something to be set aside since my mother's womb? No."
- H. V28-29, He continues, "You heard me say I am not the one you are waiting for, but I am just a precursor. Who is more important? The groom or the groomsman? The groom or the usher? The groom or the DJ?"
- I. V30, Here's the essence of it - I must decrease (become less important) so that he can increase (become more important).
 - 1. I must become less the focus so that he can become more of the focus
 - a) Isn't that just the opposite of everything in our culture?
 - 2. John meant it too. He will continue decreasing so that God can be glorified in his life and it will lead to his imprisonment, his despair, his death. Why? So God can work good in John, making him more and more like the God he images, and Jesus can take center stage.
 - a) This story isn't about John the Baptist
 - b) It's also not about me, about the elders, about you, Revolve, your favorite Christian celebrity, a politician, etc.
- J. V31-33, He expounds upon his statement: Jesus is above all things b/c he is before all things. We are from down here, he is from up there. We speak about earthly things with early wisdom. He speaks of heavenly things w/ heavenly

wisdom. He is here to bear witness to what we need to know concerning the Father - the one who is True. Who do YOU think we should listen to? Who do YOU think needs more of a platform? Me?

- K. V34, For Jesus speaks the Words of God in the fullness of the power of God.
 - 1. The prophets had a measure of the Spirit (Elisha had a double portion of Elijah, for example). Jesus has the Spirit without measure. Why?
- L. V35-36, So listen to the Son. Don't worry about me, poor ol' John the baptizer. Focus on Jesus. Obey Jesus. If you focus on him you can have life. Focus on me? The wrath of God still remains on you.
 - 1. Wow. Can you imagine if more people in ministry had that perspective. Don't focus on me, focus on God. Don't worry about my instagram account, my twitter feed, my podcast, just focus on Jesus. I can't give you the Spirit without measure! I can't save your soul.
- III. Analysis: What do we see here? We see a war of the flesh versus the Spirit.
 - A. *Read Galatians 5:16-26*
 - 1. Stark contrast between the flesh and the Spirit.
 - B. Look at what the flesh yields John 3 through a Galatians lens:
 - 1. Debating; impulsiveness; stirring the pot; spreading the dissension; provoking one another; envying one another; trying to justify 'What I deserve'; wanting to be the savior, the focus, rather than exalting the Rescuer; comparing by cutting others down (or cutting yourself down); stealing the show from the groom; wanting to be above all; ultimately, gratifying the flesh - being obedient to the flesh
 - C. Look at John as a picture of walking in the Spirit
 - 1. He must increase. I must decrease; He must be above all; He must be obeyed; I bear witness to HIM not myself; He is full of the Spirit in power; He can save;
 - 2. Back to Galatians: love for God and people; joy in Jesus; peace in your domain; patience in the midst of hardship; kindness when faced w/ strife; goodness in the face of sin and immorality; gentleness rather than infighting; self-control rather than impulsivity;
 - a) And the Law can't produce those things b/c flesh can only produce flesh
 - D. So how do you get to be like John? You must decrease so Jesus can increase.
 - 1. Ultimately - "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." **STEP ONE: Be crucified with Christ by faith.**
 - 2. **STEP TWO: Constantly humble yourself, remembering it's not about you.**
 - 3. Humble yourself is to kill your pride, but what is pride?
 - a) *"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Gal 6:14*

- b) It would be easy for me to boast in X, but that won't save me...
- 4. What does it mean to humble yourself?
 - a) It doesn't mean thinking less of yourself. It means thinking of yourself less and thinking of Jesus and others more.
 - b) Conviction and awareness that leads to repentance and saving faith is good. But when you camp out there you just make it about yourself again.
 - (1) Get up. Confess it. Move on. It's already been nailed to the cross and paid for. Now you're a conqueror, a SON!
 - (2) Constant self-deprecation isn't humility - it's a subtle form of pride.**
 - c) Humility is acknowledging he is above all, he is God, it's about him, he gets center stage, and you are just along for the ride
 - (1) Humility is realizing that it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom, but it's also not about you
 - (2) It's up to him what kind of tool you are in the master's hand. He is the potter. You are the clay.
 - (3) It's up to him what kind of domain you have, mental capacity you have, riches or poverty you have - just be faithful with what you've been given.
 - d) Humility walks in meekness b/c it knows that but by the grace of God I'd be a mess and when I do something good it is Jesus working in me, not me at all!
 - e) Humility acknowledges that my natural man was enslaved to sin, prone to wander and so I need to constantly be checking my actions, my intentions, my thoughts, my heart by the Spirit of God
 - (1) If you aren't avoiding sin and fighting for purity, you aren't humble. You're arrogant. You want to be God.
 - f) Humility realizes that it's the power of Christ that does things through you so the humble person obeys Jesus.
 - (1) Are you resistant to obeying your King? You're not humble - you're an insubordinate, insurrectionist, a rebel
 - g) Humility results in prayer - b/c if you don't pray, you think you're the cat's meow, the bee's knees, the king of the hill, the admiral of your bathtub - but when you know who you are and whose you are, you grab that wartime walkie talkie and you call the commander.
 - (1) Are you prayerless? Then you aren't humble.
 - h) Humility isn't about being committed (the Pharisees were committed). It's about being surrendered. Are you committed or are you surrendered?
 - (1) Are you just committed to Christianity, gritting it out or are you surrendered? Commitment isn't humility.

5. STEP ONE: Be crucified with Christ by faith.

6. STEP TWO: Constantly humble yourself, remembering it's not about you.

IV. Conclusion: What's the result of decreasing, of humbling yourself, of constantly checking yourself and your intentions to acknowledge it isn't about you at all, but it's about your King? What's the result of being transformed by this truth and the Holy Spirit?

A. RESULT 1: Jesus is given center stage as he deserves.

B. RESULT 2: You become who God created you to be - you become more and more the real you.

1. You reflect the King back to the world
2. You point to the one who is the Author of Life
3. You use your gifts, talents, abilities, not to draw attention to yourself but (when attention comes...) to point it back to Jesus who made you and gave you everything you have
 - a) After all, you cannot have even one thing if it were not given to you by God.
4. He does this all by pouring out his Spirit upon you (John 3, Gal 5)

C. 7 simple words that really embody the whole story: **He must increase, but I must decrease.**

1. If you want to maximize the glory of God in your life, you have to let go
 - a) That's where true freedom is found, true life
2. Don't wait until you hit rock bottom (as some do); Don't wait until you are sick and almost dead (as many do); Don't wait until a tragedy (as some do); Don't wait until you can explain it all, answer all the questions, or no longer have skepticism (it's about faith); Don't wait until it's too late (as the majority do...).
3. Give up today. Surrender today. Decrease today.
4. Release the things of this world, release the thoughts of this world, release the goals of this world, turn your face to the cross of Christ and surrender. Decrease that he may increase.

D. Don't you want that?

1. Don't you want forgiveness from your sin? Decrease. Surrender!
2. Don't you want a life of purpose? Not a life about your business venture alone, but about your business venture used to make your King FAMOUS in all the world!
3. Don't you want to be free from grumbling, infighting, envy, and conceit?
4. Don't you want to not care if that person is fatter than you, taller than you, better looking than you, has more hair than you, better abs than you, smarter kids, and on and on? Rest in Jesus b/c it's not about you!
5. You can be free. You can walk w/ the Spirit of Jesus and experience the joy of knowing it's his story.

6. Decrease that he may increase in your life.