



Series: The Gospel of John...For God so Loved

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Text: John 3:22-30

Title: Making Much of Christ

INTRODUCTION

Morning! What up, MPR, those watching online and listening to the podcast. For those that are new, my name is Pastor Rashard, and as one of the elders here, for those that are new, we are glad to have you worship with us this morning.

So, we are in John 3:22-30. And today, we will see for the third time John the Baptist tells his disciples that he is not Jesus. In chapter 1, he came to them as a witness and a testimony about the light, baptizing them with repentance. Then in

chapter 2, he said that his role was to set God's people's path straight so they could be prepared to receive the Lord. Then here, in chapter 3, we told them again he was not the Christ.

This moment here reminds me a little bit of when I was growing up. I remember those times when my mama would tell me to do something, and if I did not do for after the third time. The wrath of Cheryl Barnes was coming for ya. You see that third time meant something and means something for us today.

You see, John the Baptist disciples knew what he was saying, but they were battling these truths in their souls. They were



genuinely asking the question, “*Why would someone as famous as John the Baptist not want the spotlight?*”

In a short amount of words, John the Baptist tells them he does not live for the applause of people, nor is he moved by the joys or difficulties in his circumstances because *he caught up knowing Christ and making him known*. His records and his accomplishments are meaningless because he is trying to fulfill the plan God designed for him.

That is what we will see through John the Baptist’s message to his disciples. He wanted them to know that he lived his life *to know Jesus and to make much of Jesus*, which brings me to the main idea for today’s sermon. **To make much of Christ, we must recognize God’s role, know our role, and fight for intimacy to walk humbly with him.**

As we go through the text, I am going to break down this into our four points for today: **1) RECOGNIZE God’s role, 2) KNOW your role, 3) FIGHT for intimacy, 4) WALK humbly.** Pray!

So, we left off in John 3:1-22 with Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. He told him to receive eternal life that, *he needed to be born again*. Nicodemus did not know what to do with that because this statement was so crazy. And Jesus tells him to be born again means that you must die in order to live. To that, he must believe in him. Which is more than wanting to escape from hell. It is living with Him in this life and the life to come.

So, we arrive here at our text for today, and the scriptures display the idea of eternal in Christ in another way. Verse 22

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, where he spent time with them and baptized. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were coming and being baptized, 24 since John had not yet been thrown into prison.

So, what we see here is that Jesus is near the Judean countryside, and John the Baptist is near Salim. People were coming both to Jesus and John the Baptist. As we look at these two verses, I want us to pay attention to three things here.

First, according to John 4:2, Jesus was not baptizing but overseeing the baptizing by his disciples. What important here is that this was not a Christian baptism because Jesus had yet to die. But rather, this is a “kingdom baptism.” A baptism of repentance that Israel needs to have to enter into the new covenant in Christ. This new life! *We will come back to this later.*

Second, as we look to verse 24, the other writers in the NT, viewed the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as starting with John the Baptist’s imprisonment in Galilee, not Judea. Let’s look at Mark 1:14 *14 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. (Mark 1:14).* John, the writer, here is showing us here is the spiritual transition from



John the Baptist to Jesus. His primary concern was to show us that John the Baptist was preparing the way for Jesus.

Third, in verse 23, the scriptures mention this body of water called, Aenon. This body of water is not exactly known, but the importance here is that John moved from the south to the north, leaving Jesus to baptize in the more desirable area.

What can gather is John the Baptist here is positioning his life to slowly fade out of the picture. He knew his role: to know Christ and make Him known. To do that, he needed to fade into the background so Jesus could be the star. Verse 25

25 Then, a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. 26 So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him."

Here, John the Baptist disciples got into an argument with a fellow Jew about purification. John the Baptist disciples had no intention to discuss these matters. This was a way for them to get his attention. But it backfired on them.

As they were talking about how to get cleansed (purification), they missed the living water standing in front of them. Did you catch that? Their religious activity and theology got in the way of seeing Jesus in plain sight. They could not see the irony here. The competition here was not about *purification but*

prominence. And John's the Baptist lets them know he ain't playing those games.

27 John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.'

So, he sets the fact straight real quick with his disciples. He tells them all of our gifts, abilities, dominion, and authority come from God above.

There is nothing on this planet that God does not deem as His. He gives us gifts, talents, dominion, and authority accordingly for our joy and his good.

These gifts are meant to flow through us back up to him. (Slow down) which brings us to our first point. To make much of Christ in this life and the life to come, you must **RECOGNIZE God's role.**

God's role in this universe is to make much of himself. It is to showcase his glory. And he chooses to use us by giving us influence, dominion, and gifts to be used for his purposes. But the problem ensues when we think those things are only for our glory and our benefit rather than for His.

Thus, our response to our giftings, abilities, dominion and circumstances shows either the shallowness or the depth of our relationship with God.



I need us to pay to attend here. When we doubt God's hand in our life, we are ultimately doubting God. Because when we have a deep discontent about God's sovereignty, it is more than unbelief and unfaithfulness. It says that you want to be God.

To make much Christ in our life, we must see God as our wise, sovereign, and kind Ruler. He does as he pleases because this is his world, and we are just living in it.

If not, we are not careful, we will begin to make our gifts and circumstances our identity. And when that happens, we start walking in idolatry. And an idolatrous person begins to treat God and those around them as *tools or barriers to their personal kingdom*.

And when that happens, it is hard to know God's role in this world when we think very little of him. But the good news is that God created every one of us to display creatively who he is. And as you discover more of God, you will discover yourself.

These two realities do not compete, but they complement each other. Both seeking God and knowing yourself are in a relationship with each other. So, as you operate in your role and giftings, these things bring glory to him. We see this in these next few verses. Verse 28

28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him. 29 He who has the

bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice.

So, John the Baptist continues to explain to his disciples he is not the Messiah by giving a marriage metaphor about his role in the kingdom. He says he is not the groom but the best man. But we need to take note here, John the Baptist is not affirming or denying the church in this passage as we talk about the bride. But we do know he is speaking about a redeemed Israel as the bride.

Who, as a people, rejected God. So, God sent John the Baptist to Israel, his bride, to invite them back into fellowship with him. Let's look at some verses from the OT to understand this:

- *Isaiah 54:5: Indeed, your husband is your Maker— his name is the Lord of Armies— and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of the whole earth.*
- *Hosea 2:19-20: I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. 20 I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord.*

This whole ordeal is complex, but we need to see here that John the Baptist's role is **unique and specific** as he addresses the people of God in redemptive history. This brings me to my next point.



To want to make much of Christ in this and the life to come, you must not only recognize God's role, but you must also need to **KNOW your role.**

We need to see if this text, this marriage ceremony that John is talking about, is not like our wedding ceremony where the bride walks down the aisle to be received by the groom. Rather, in the Jewish tradition, the groom walks down the aisle to be received by his bride, and it is the best man getting everything ready for the wedding. Not only that he also is officiating the wedding, joining the hand of the bride and groom. After the wedding ceremony, the officiant and the best man are off to the side because the bride and groom are celebrating.

So, John the Baptist, as the best man, is saying his job is to unite God to his people and then to slowly fade out of the picture because his job is done. The bride and groom are united. His role and God's role do not compete, but rather they work in harmony. God gets the glory, when we play the part he designed for us to play in his kingdom.

So how about you? Do you know your role? Do you know that God created uniquely with special abilities only you can do? Or are you like John the Baptist disciples, you are so busy judging yourself against others that you miss out on joy in serving God?

To help us out, I created a quick acronym to help you **S.P.O.T your role in God's kingdom. You need to look at your Spiritual Gifts, Passion, Opportunities, and Talents.**

- *Spiritual Gifts - Search the scriptures- Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4*
- *Passion - Who has God given you a heart for?*
- *Opportunities - We can make up opportunities, we have to be led by the Spirit*
- *Talents - What talents do you have that give you joy, that blesses others?*

And as you work on these things you need to be asking the question – How **do I glorify God and others within my role?**

There is a quote by Pablo Picasso that says, *“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.”* So how are you giving yourself away for the glory of God and the flourishing of humanity?

But if we could be honest, there are some of us here, and we know the assignment God has given us a role, but we don't want it because we're not the ones being glorified in it. As we learned a few weeks ago, we don't want the role God has given us because we aren't the ones shining.

But if we operate in that type of thinking, we are actually diminishing God's hand in our life because our role isn't grand and big. You think you are insignificant. You think that compared to others your life has no meaning. But that is far from the truth. *Your role matters because you matter to God.*

Like John the Baptist, your role is meant to help you enjoy Jesus not take away from it. But for his glory. So, my question to ask you, as you examine your role in the kingdom, *are you enjoying Jesus in the process, or are you resenting him?*



Nonetheless, when we enjoy Jesus in our role, we can join John the Baptist in saying in verses 29-30 *He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So, this joy of mine is complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

To be clear, John the Baptist is not talking down on himself rather he has found a true satisfaction beyond worldly applause, which is intimacy with Christ.

Not only did John the Baptist recognize God's role and knew his role, but he also understood to want to make much of Christ in this life and the life to come, you need to **FIGHT for intimacy.**

This is our third point. Fight for intimacy with God. This is what we see from John the Baptist in verse 29. The text says that those who "stands" and "listens" to the groom's voice rejoice greatly.

It is important here to take notice of the ordering of these words. He mentions *stands* before to *listens*. Standing signifies the stopping of activity to be "attentive." It is like in the lobby here at church; when you're having a conversation with someone, you are not walking or running but standing because you want to hear what they have to say. And John the Baptist is saying he rejoices, stopping to hear God's voice.

To have intimacy with God means savoring Jesus as a person. It is delighting in his love, care, and protection over you. It is talking to him and listening to him in prayer.

I know that many of us love God, but we struggle to know what God wants from us. And I want to challenge you to slow down and talk with Jesus. God loves you and wants to talk with you.

You see, intimacy with God takes time. It takes honesty, humility, asking hard questions, and discerning your lesser loves to the Lord. It takes a heart that is to be repented and attentive before the Lord.

This is what we see with John the Baptist, as the best man, he was confident to execute his role because he knew Jesus' wishes and desires because his desires were in check.

You see, John the Baptist prioritizes intimacy with Jesus and that overflow in life. Thus, he was able to say in the latter half of verse 29 -30, *So this joy of mine is complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

As the best man, John the Baptist steps away because his job is done. John the Baptist knew God's role, his role thus, it brought him joy in Christ. He was able to humbly let all the attention be on the bride and the groom.

This brings me to my final point. To make much of Christ in this life and the life to come, we must not only know God's, our role, but as we walk to fight for intimacy, we have to **WALK humbly.**



The humility that John the Baptist displayed here was him *decreasing and Jesus increasing*. I once heard that *"Humility is not the product of direct cultivation; rather, it is a by-product."* This means that the more we try to be humble, the less we are humble. Because true humility is not based upon an *activity*, but it is based on a *person* – Jesus Christ.

As Robert Murray McCheyne famously said, *"for every look at self, take ten looks at Christ."* Humility requires us to have a clear view of brokenness. It doesn't leave us to deal with it on our own because we can't produce it on our own. We do not define our brokenness – God does.

Humility invites us to take full stock of our sins and our brokenness and throw ourselves completely on the mercy of Christ. When we seek Christ, as we *"stand and listen,"* the more he will increase in us, and we will decrease because *Christ changes our affections*. We will then naturally start making less of ourselves as we make much of him.

You see, as we look to Jesus. He took on many roles we could never do - Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. As Savior, he rescues us into grace because we were facing an eternal punishment that we could never exonerate. As Redeemer, is that he exchange all our records of wrongdoing for his perfect record before the Father.

Because of his death and resurrection, we stand no longer condemned but redeemed by the blood of Jesus. In his humiliation, we received his resurrection, and he did all this because of his deep love for the Father, for the sake of His renown. Jesus knew God's role, his role as he did, he walked both in intimacy and humility as he went to the cross. Amen!

CONCLUSION

To bring this to a close, as I was preparing for this sermon, the Lord woke me up at 4 AM last week and reminded me that my life was out of order. Over this season of life, I have prioritized my role as a pastor first, then my responsibilities as a husband, father, brother, and son, and lastly, my intimacy with Jesus when it should be the other way around. I needed to repent.

So how about you? Where have you allowed the things in your life to become more significant in your soul where Jesus has become less?

Like John the Baptist, the only way to make much of Christ in this life but also for life to come, we must recognize God's role, know our role and fight for intimacy, and to walk humbly with him. Let us pray!