



---

**Series:** The Gospel of John: For God So Loved...  
**Date:** September 4, 2022 (Labor Day Weekend)  
**Speaker:** Joseph Anderson, Campus Pastor of Mercy Northeast  
**Text:** John 1:19-34  
**Title:** His Plan is Better

### John the Baptist's Testimony

Main Idea: When you know the plan who you are doesn't matter

- In 2012 Christopher Nolan did it again
- After his unprecedented success in 2008 with the Dark Knight
- just four years later he released The Dark Knight Rises
  - Plunging Batman into an epic battle for his own life
  - And for the life of his city
- I will try not to give away too much of the story but it's 2022 so you should have seen it by now
- Batman's arch nemesis is a character named Bane
  - He is big
  - He is bald
  - He is yoked
  - Instead of a beard
- He wears this creepy mask that changes his voice
- I mean the brother is a problem
- And he has one singular aim
  - He wants to blow up Gotham
    - His plan is intricate and detailed
    - His operations resourced
    - His subjects loyal
    - His training exquisite
  - And boy if This wasn't a superhero movie
  - I think he would have pulled it off
    - in real life Gotham would have been blown to smithereens
  - but of course, spoiler alert
    - Batman saves the city at the last second
- But y'all the reason I believe Bane should have won
  - would have won in real life is put on **full display**
  - In the opening scene
- The CIA has captured A nuclear physicist named Dr Pavel and are extracting him out of Uzbekistan
  - Accompanying Dr Pavel were 2 men
    - Assassin spy types



- 
- So, CIA takes them along for the ride
  - So here we are on this plane
    - The lead CIA agent in his other operatives
      - dr. Pavel
      - and at this point 2 unidentified men
        - their hands are tied
        - bags over their heads
    - The lead CIA operative seems to be familiar with the organization these 2 men work for
      - So, they begin to interrogate them
        - who are you
        - why are you here
        - what do you want with dr. Pavel
      - Silence
      - and then he turns to the second man
        - Who has seen right through his interrogation methods
        - This speech is odd
        - but his instincts are impeccable
  - And the CIA agent quite bewildered ask him a simple question
    - who are you
  - And Baines answer is profound
    - He doesn't answer like a novice villain
    - Giving a monolog as the superhero escapes
    - no, he answers with Simplicity and clarity
  - he says
    - it doesn't matter who we are
    - what matters is our plan
  - They almost succeeded in setting off a nuclear bomb in a heavily populated city
    - because they understood one's ability to accomplish a common goal is hindered by self-promotion
  - Today we come to the story of John the Baptist
    - and he will be approached by a group of men clamoring around him to ask him one simple question



- 
- who are you
  - And would it surprise you if I told you that John's answer was essentially the same as Bane's
    - it doesn't matter who we are
    - what matters is the plan
  - Now before we go any further, I need to say
  - Who you are does matter
    - Your character matters
    - Your well-being matters
    - The fact that you are loved and cared for by God that matters
  - But let's be honest
    - We want to matter way more than that
      - We want prestige
      - We want glory
      - We want to be somebody
  - But that's not actually what's important
    - What's important is the plan
  - And if you're thinking
    - I did not come to church to have some Pastor tell me that I don't matter
    - I get that
    - but if you stick with, I believe you will be convinced
    - Because here's the bottom line
    - God's plan is better
  - And so, as we open the word of God today, that what we will see
    - that **Gods plan is better**
  - And it is my hope and when we leave here today
    - we will leave with a **decreased desire** to identify ourselves
      - by our giftings
      - our status
      - and Our prominence
    - and that we will have an expounded view of God's plan
      - With all its glorious implications
-



---

## PRAY

**19** This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

- So, John the Baptist is minding his business
    - eating locusts and honey and what not
    - And off in the distance he sees this Brigade
    - they were too deep
  - The text tells us that these men were priests and Levites
    - which means They were likely very **strict law keepers**
    - very **traditional**
    - well **respected**
    - and they would prove to have the kind of power to get you knocked off
      - if you stepped outside of their religious framework
  - This would not have been a casual interaction
  - It would have **trail** like
- They viewed it as their responsibility to either validate
  - or invalidate the ministry of those with influence
  - They were the ministry police
  - and here they are pulling up on John the Baptist
    - This Hoard of people with 1 simple question
    - Who are you

## Who are You

- Age-old question isn't it
  - Who are you
  - Why are we here
  - What are we created for
- Our culture and our society have something to say on this
  - Something different than John
- They say... you want to know who you are
  - find your unique **Identity**



- 
- You want to be somebody
    - Create **Security** for yourself and your loved ones
  - Do you want to know the **meaning** of life
    - find what makes you **Happy**
  - Our present culture asserts that **who are you** is the only question that matters
    - That by finding your identity
    - Securing the bag
    - and creating your happiness
      - You can find life
      - that you can find ... salvation
  - But can we be honest
    - who is that really working for
    - Who has it made happy
    - I bought the lie
    - I ran hard after my happiness
    - Only to have an intimate encounter with rock bottom
  - you see these answers that the world provides>>>
  - to the question who are you
    - make a very dangerous assertion
    - They claim that salvation lies within ourselves
  - the world wants to know from us
    - the same thing the Jews wanted to know about John
    - Who are you
    - are you the Messiah
  - Can I try and tell this together for us
    - the Messiah was Heralded from the beginning of time to be the savior of Israel and the world
    - He would defeat their enemies
    - He would sit on the throne
    - He would define right from wrong
    - He would reign forever
  - And so, tell me who does the world tell you should fight for you
    - If you don't stand up for yourself who will
-



- Who does the world say should sit on your throne and Rule your life
  - young king
  - queen bee
- Who does the world give permission to Define right from wrong
  - Only you...your truth is your truth
- In this economy Who is the savior of **Your** World
  - you are so
  - Follow your heart
  - chase your dreams
  - you can be anything you want to be
- Doesn't this resonate with us
  - oh, how we long to be the captain of our ship
  - get it out the mud
  - be self-made
  - fix our problems
  - and create our own reality
- This resonates with us so much that Shawn Carter could change his name to HOVA

- and still sell 140 million records
- When Jay-Z dropped
- H to the Izo the world went crazy
- It was an anthem
- Cause what can we say
- We all want to be God

- **But Not John**

- Look with me at the text

Who are you?"

**20** He didn't deny it but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

- I am not the Messiah...
  - That aint what they asked him
  - But he wants to leave no doubt
- Saints we must turn and pay attention to this man
  - Here is a man distinct from us
  - Here is a man with a different worldview
    - and different priorities



- here is a man who seems to know something we Desperately need to know as well
- a man who will point out Jesus until his own disciples leave him
  - We will see that next week
- A man that will say in 2 chapters I must decrease and God must increase
- And we quote him
  - but what we mean is
  - God must increase so we can ride his coattails
- Here is a man not swept up by the appeal of messiahship...
  - let's revisit the situation
  - dangerous men asking him to validate His
  - ministry
  - his life's work
  - his God given purpose
- And without flinching
  - He openly confesses the truth
    - I am not the Messiah

- You see... John is not the only one with an influential Ministry
  - many had come before him
  - and many would come after him
  - who sought to stake their claim for being the **long-awaited chosen one**
- This was likely not the Jews first interaction with a man like this
  - But his answers are different
  - this is not at all how they expected the conversation to go
- They asked him
  - V19 who are you... Unprompted
    - v20 I am not the Messiah
  - v21 are you Elijah then
    - I am not
  - are you the prophet
    - no
- And can you not imagine their **confusion**
  - their **frustration** even



- as his answers get shorter and shorter
  - I am not the Messiah
  - I am not
  - No
- By the time we get to v22 they are like
  - "Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"
- They are frustrated because instead of giving them the answer they expected
  - John has answered
  - it doesn't matter who I am
  - what matters is the plan
- There is much we can learn from John the baptizer
- the man unconcerned with his status or his standing
  - Not consumed with his identity
  - The man who stared danger in the face
  - and his instincts Didn't drive him toward Safety and Security
- A man who found his happiness outside of himself
- Y'all this was deep for John
  - so deep in fact that he miss identified himself
  - Because he was too busy staring at God
- Are you Elijah they asked him
  - he doesn't even hit a speed bump before he answers
  - I am not
- What's crazy is Jesus disagrees with him
- Matthew 11
  - For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. **14** And if you're willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come. **15** Let anyone who has ears[e] listen.
- And It's not just here
  - Every other gospel asserts that John is Elijah



- as a matter of fact, Jesus is going to say that John is the greatest Prophet to have ever lived
- but John was so wrapped up in the magnificent plan of God that he lost himself
  - He never stopped to count his followers
  - Or read his press
  - His status didn't matter to him
  - he didn't see who he was, yet his impact for the kingdom was massive...
  - What a stark contrast to those **giving everything** they have **looking** for identity with little gospel impact
- God is showing us that if we want to be impactful for the kingdom
  - lesson 1 it's not about us
  - our contribution is never conclusive
  - Our investment means nothing without God's blessing and his hand
- Psalm 127
  - Unless the Lord builds the house,
  - those who build it labor in vain.
  - Unless the Lord watches over the city,
  - the watchman stays awake in vain.
- Paul is going to say
  - I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God
- You see John understood that his Status and Prestige were not an end to themselves
  - Their only purpose was to Advanced God's plan
- And so, when they ask him **who are you**
  - He highlights what he is not
  - in light of the **one** who is
- **That's so different**
  - And the Jews are like
  - That's not the answer were looking for



- We need more

**22** “Who are you, then?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?”

- And so here we go
  - John is finally about to give them something
- They asked him this wide-open question
  - tell us about yourself
  - Tell us about your ministry
  - tell us who you are
  - tell us anything
- And what does he say
  - Drum roll

**23** He said, “I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord [ ]—just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

- A voice???
- Really John
  - A voice
  - Ohh, you know they was sick of him
  - not a prophet
    - but a voice in the wilderness
  - Not a man of significance
    - but a sound
- They are like you know what John
- You got it
  - They don’t even respond to his response
  - They are just like ok well what are you baptizing for
- For real they don’t address what he said
  - They are on to the next question
  - V25
    - “Why then do you baptize if you aren’t the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?”
- But in their rush to move on they miss the crucial message John is trying to give



- 
- The Jews are looking at the voice
    - examining the voice
    - Investigating The Voice
    - All the while missing what the voice is saying
  - John has something to tell us
    - he knows something about God
    - He tried to tell the Jews
    - They didn't listen
    - will we?
  - His assertion about being a voice is a quotation from the Old Testament
  - And in his quotation Revelation begins to burst through
    - The dam is beginning to break
    - And John's understanding of the Messiah is beginning to rush through the cracks
  - He is quoting Isaiah 40
  - And it changes everything
    - **Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for.... v3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. (Isa. 40:1–3)**
    - You see John knew that he was not just preparing the way for some Messiah
    - he understood that he was preparing the way for God's Messiah
    - who by the way was God
  - He said
    - I'm just a voice
    - My only contribution is to bring a message on behalf of the **Word From the beginning**
    - **The word who was God**
  - It was laughable to John that they would consider him the Messiah



- Me are you crazy?
- I can't save a nation
- I can't save my self
- I am Not the messiah
- But the one who is coming
  - I can't shine his shoes
- That's what he has to say about himself

26 "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him.  
27 He is the one coming after me, [n] whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."

- Slaves untied sandal straps
- and John said I'm not even worthy to do that
- So, what is it

#### What is fueling John's Disassociation with Messiahship?

- With prestige
  - With self-sufficiency

- Why wasn't he interested in the Jerusalem times 40 under 40 most likely to be the Messiah
- Why does John answer no?
- Aren't you **intrigued** by his lack of **concern** with their **perception** of him
- Isn't it **interesting** how he doesn't meet their **questions with self-defense**
- Don't you wonder Why He doesn't seem to **struggle** with the same **insecurities** that we do
  - he seems **to lack the compulsion** to be properly understood
- his pride isn't driving him toward **platform**
  - And he seems unimpressed by these men who could give it to him
- Why is he content with being a voice
  - and how can we be more like him
  - How can We lay our Quests for messiahship down



- 
- Ohh Saints the text has something to say
  - Something to
    - Shift our perspective
    - change our priorities
    - and transform our eternity
  - So, my friends let me reiterate to you
    - that we will buckle and break under the weight of Our Own messiahship
  - You Know I'm right
    - Our need to **defend yourself** confirms it
    - Our consuming fear of being **misunderstood** confirms it
    - our bitterness when were Overlooked confirms it
      - Our need to be accepted
      - and our insecurities
      - and our Brokenness
      - and our lack of identity confirms it
    - our inability to justify ourselves confirms it
  - Our attempts to be the messiah
  - Our attempt at self-sufficiency... multiply in US
    - Fear
    - Insecurity
    - Pride
    - failure
  - Fail
    - Fall
    - Flounder
    - Flop
  - Are you not tired of trying
    - Don't you want rest
  - here is the good news You can stop trying to be someone
    - it doesn't matter who we are
      - God has a plan
  - as this day in the story of John's life concludes in verse 28
  - We wake up to the bright sunshine of verse 29
    - The Lamb of God in the plan of God
-



---

## The Lamb of God IS THE PLAN Of GOD

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

- This is God's plan
- Every single word is Necessary
- Every single word is glorious
- Every single word is gospel
- Every single word is good news
- So, let's take it word by word
  - Phrase by phrase
- We start with Lamb
- have you ever considered
- Why the word lamb
  - if I were writing the story, it would have said
    - look the king of God
    - look the prophet of God
    - look the Messiah of God
- But John says
  - Look
  - behold the Lamb of God
- Lamb is strange language
  - but ... it is all over the Old Testament
- When Abraham was preparing to sacrifice his son in obedience
  - as He prepared to do the unthinkable
  - God said no no bring me a lamb
- When God told the people of Israel that he was taking out all the **firstborn** children in Egypt
  - he said but not yours bring me a lamb
- When the people sin required **atonement** in the desert God said I will forgive you
  - Bring me a Lamb



- 
- And when the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the coming Messiah
    - He did not **only** see a conquering King but a suffering servant
    - And this man was to be a sacrificial Lamb
  
  - Why the Lamb
    - Because lambs functioned as a kind of payment for our sin
  
  - From the beginning of time, man's sin has demanded punishment
    - we have rebelled against a
      - kind
      - loving
      - holy God
    - We rejected the God who created us
      - and we destroyed his good creation
  
    - there must be retribution
  
  - and from the beginning of time, animals have been killed as a substitute
  
  - In the garden Adam and Eve turn from God
    - and God kills an animal to cover their shame
  
  - So, from the time of Adam
    - to the time of Jesus
      - Millions upon millions of animals were slaughtered
      - Lamb after lamb after lamb after lamb
    - for thousands of years
  
  - And this **reveals** the seriousness of our sin to God
  - He does not take it lightly
    - If that rubs, you the wrong way I'm sorry
    - but it's the truth
    - our sins demand our death
  
  - Romans 6 says
    - the wages of sin is death,
-



- 
- But instead of punishing them for their sin God allowed the blood of Lambs
    - And bulls
    - And goats
  - But here's the problem
  - The blood of lambs was a Band-Aid on our cancer
    - we still weren't Justified
    - We still weren't right with God
  - The Arthur of Hebrews is going to say
    - it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins
    - So, what is going on here
    - What is the point of all this blood shed
  - Well...
    - 1) it points to the Heinous nature of our sin
    - 2) But more importantly It foreshadows a much greater reality
    - John says look... Behold the Lamb
  - But this Lamb is different
    - This won't just any old lamb
    - This Lamb belonged to God
  - This is way different than any of our lambs
  - You know our attempts to be right with God
    - They're just lesser lambs
      - Do more good
      - Be more kind
      - Curse less
      - Give more
  - And we end up like Marry
    - With all these little Lambs
  - But God's plan
    - His plan for salvation
    - his plan for Redemption
    - does not need our lambs anymore
  - Behold the Lamb of God
    - It is not a lamb that we can purchase
    - It is not a lamb that we can acquire
    - It is not the Lamb of our Good Deeds
-



- 
- or our morale triumphs
  - It is not the lamb of our self-punishment
  - or self-justification
  - This is not the Lamb of our generosity
  - or our Bible reading
  - or our church attendance
  - This Lamb is **not** our Lamb at all
    - Behold the Lamb of God
  - And because this is God's Lamb
    - this lamb takes away the sins of the world
  - Ohh this is Good news
    - This Lamb removes sin
    - He removes it
    - He washes us clean
  - And how will he do so
  - The same way every other lamb in history has
    - God's Lamb will be slaughtered
  - This Lamb
  - God's lamb would be
    - unjustly arrested
    - Falsely accused
    - Beaten within an inch of his life
    - Only to have his murder Publicly displayed for the entertainment of others
    - they drove spikes through his wrist
    - nails to his feet
    - spear through his side
  - This is what our sin demanded
    - And there is nothing that we could do to make it right
    - Our lambs were insufficient to make us right with God
  - So, hear the good news of the Gospel
    - God has provided a lamb
-



- 
- And this Lamb
  - This Lamb
    - Is not **limited** in scope or capacity
    - this lamb takes away the sin of the world
  
    - Without exception all sin can be covered
      - Removed
      - taken away
  
  - Ohh praise him
    - There is no sin too heinous
    - no act too evil
    - no failure too frequent
    - to put you outside of the reach of the blood of this lamb
  
  - If everyone in the world turned to him everyone would be saved
    - So that means you are not too far from the Lamb
    - You struggling with same sex attraction
  
  - You hiding your addiction
  - You with broken past
  - You who was abused
  - You
  - You
  - You are not too far Gone
- 
- what Grace is this
    - What kindness is this
    - What kind of lamb is this
  
  - And just when we thought God's display of love for us could not get any greater
  
  - Ohh Friends, we learn that this Lamb is God
- 30** This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'



- 
- **So, when John says look**
    - **Look**
    - **Look at him**
    - **He is Saying look at God**
  - John wasn't coming down from the mountain with the revelation of a God the people could not see
    - He wasn't painting a picture of a prophesied messiah that the people could not grasp
  - Instead, he turned
    - he pointed
    - He identified
    - And he wasn't just saying behold the Lamb of God
    - But behold the Lamb,,,,,God
  - He was really there
    - God was there in their presence
    - He was Immanuel
      - God with us
  - This was crazy
  - He was not a distant deity
    - He's not a shadow investor looking for a return
    - He is boots-on-the-ground
      - visible
      - Hearable
      - Touchable
  - He was with them
    - God is near
  - Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world
    - Look at him
  - This was God's plan
    - To send his only son into the world to be a sacrificial lamb for you and for me
    - oh, how God loves us
  - And this changes everything
    - If God has a lamb, we don't have to be great
-



- 
- If God has a lamb, there is joy in repentance
  - If God has lamb neediness is better than self sufficiency
  - Behold the lamb of God you can be weak
  - Behold the lamb of God it is not up to you
  - Behold the lamb of he takes away sin
    - We can cease striving
    - Cease validating
    - Cease Justifying
    - We can stop staring at ourselves and look at Jesus
    - It doesn't matter who you are
    - If you know his plan
- 
- So, here's my question to you friend
    - Are you ready to embrace God's plan over your own
    - To find your identity in him
    - to find your security in him
    - to find your happiness and joy in him
    - to find Salvation in him alone
  
  - I promise you his plan is better