

**Livin' the Life**  
**A Tribute to John the Witness, part 11**  
**John 3:22-30**  
January 7, 2018

We continue our series in the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life, today looking at "A Tribute to John the Witness," in 3:22-30. In this passage, John gives his last witness to Jesus in this gospel when his disciples come to him because so many people are going to Jesus.

Jesus and his disciples have moved to the area surrounding Judea where he remained with his disciples and were baptizing people.<sup>1</sup> Though Jesus had a large public ministry, he poured himself into the twelve disciples to prepare them to be the future leaders of the church. They followed Jesus for three reasons. First, they followed to learn from him. Second, they followed to become like him. And third they followed and took up the cause of Jesus, making disciples. So, disciples are characterized by following Jesus, being formed by Jesus, and faithful to the mission of Jesus. That is what each one of us are called to do. The elders have been evaluating our strategy for making disciples and see the need to tweak our strategy. Making disciples is difficult. There are so many obstacles in our culture, in our lives, and in church culture that fight against making disciples.

John and his disciples are also baptizing in the same area. It appears that Jesus' baptism was similar to John's baptism. Both were a baptism of repentance, calling people to turn away from their sin and believe in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Both called people to repent and believe the gospel (Mk 1:15). Repentance and faith are characteristic of a life of faith. We repent daily of our sin and trust Jesus to overcome our sin.

A debate arose between John's disciples and a Jew, maybe a Pharisee, over purification, that is, who needs to be cleansed or how is one cleansed from their sin. At some point the debate shifted to Jesus and his baptism and the crowds that were streaming to Jesus. John's disciples did not like this so they went to John, "Rabbi, that guy who was with you across the Jordan, the one you bore witness to – look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him (26)!" They are threatened by Jesus's ministry and are jealous<sup>2</sup> even though John had witnessed about Jesus, particularly that is he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (1:29) and the Son of God (1:34). John's whole ministry was about pointing people to Jesus, the Messiah, yet when people are going to Jesus, his disciples don't like it. But here is the irony, people streaming to Jesus is a source of jealousy for his disciples but a source of joy for John. Listen to his answer, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given from heaven (27)." Everything anyone has is a gracious gift, theirs by God's sovereign design and purpose (1 Cor 4:7). This has a twofold meaning here. For John, it means that God using him as a voice pointing people to Jesus is the work of God and if God sees fit to diminish or remove that voice, that is God's sovereign choice. It also means that people going to Jesus is the work of God that no one can stop. The Spirit is blowing as he wills reminding us what Jesus said to Nicodemus, salvation is the work of God not man. Then John reminds them, "I told you already that I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him (28)." I am not the one who can take away the sins of the world Jesus is!

Then John describes his relationship to Jesus with a metaphor. "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice (29)." The bride describes those who are coming to faith in Jesus, the bridegroom. John is like the best man in a wedding, having made preparations for the ceremony and now stands back watching and rejoicing as everything is unfolding. John finds great joy in people coming to Jesus. He rejoiced because his ministry, as God's gracious gift, and is being fulfilled. The people coming to Jesus belong to Jesus not him. But this is what John has said all along. "I am not the Christ (1:20)." "I am just a voice crying in the wilderness (1:23)." So John's response to people going to Jesus is great joy and complete joy because all the attention is going to Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus himself was probably not baptizing as 4:2 tells us that Jesus did not baptize.

<sup>2</sup> Jealousy is pretty common in ministry (Num 11:26-29; Jn 12:17-19; Mk 9:38).

John, the voice of one crying in the wilderness was very significant and essential but now replaced by the voice of the Bridegroom. This voice is superior to his John's voice. This voice raises the dead (5:25; 11:43). This voice is known by the bride who respond to the voice of the Bridegroom. The voice of the Bridegroom is also the voice of the True Shepherd. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice (10:3-4). People going to Jesus is God's doing; this is God's work. The Spirit is blowing where he wishes, so it is with everyone born of the Spirit (3:8). Recognizing this increase of Jesus brought an increase of joy to John, complete joy. So, his conclusion is that Jesus must increase and he must decrease. And this Bridegroom and Shepherd is also the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:9)." The bride is the wife of the Lamb who is the Bridegroom who takes away the sins of the world.

Yet his increase led to his exaltation by means to the cross. And it is through the cross that we hear the voice of the Bridegroom and the Shepherd calling us. It is through the cross that we experience the purification and cleansing all of us need. It is through the cross that the bridegroom secured the salvation and the sanctification of his bride, the church (Eph 5:25-27). For the bridegroom is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

#### Questions for Life Groups:

1. What does it mean to repent? Why is repentance so critical to salvation and the Christian life?
2. Is repentance a daily routine in your life?
3. Why is it important to daily repent and believe Christ for overcoming sin?
4. How does daily repentance relate to a gospel centered life?
5. Do you ever feel jealous or covetous of what others have?
6. How does v 27 combat jealousy and covetousness sin in our lives?
7. Why did John rejoice in the bridegroom's voice?
8. Why was John's joy complete?
9. How does this apply to us?

