

the gospel of

JOHN

witness to the light

JOHN: JESUS IS GREATER

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Jeff Vanderstelt

Scripture Reference: John 3:22-30

Thanks for joining Doxa as we study the gospel of John. The gospel of John is a testimony of Jesus' closest friend and confidant, who spent years walking, talking and watching the son of God be the light of the world. John captures three years that fundamentally changed the course of history. For more information, service times, or to find spiritual formation guides, please visit www.doxa-church.com or find us in your favorite app store by searching "Doxa church Eastside"

Please stand for the reading of God's word. John 3:22 through 30.

After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized for John had not yet been put in prison.

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him,

"Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness -- look, he is baptizing and all are going to him."

John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him.

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. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase but I must decrease."

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Hello. Man, I wish I could be with the family right now. Miss all of you. I do want to, before I begin, just encourage you to make sure you've gone through the digital liturgy that we put together because we want you to experience not just the teaching of the word but all the other activities we do together as a family. So we put that together. If you haven't done that yet, stop and make sure you take advantage of the time to do that together. And then at the end there's also opportunity to respond in different ways and discuss together the time that we've had together and teaching. So please do that. Before we get, I want to, I want to pray.

Father, we come to you and we believe you are in control and that you are sovereign, that there is nothing that escapes you. There's nothing outside of your control and your ability. And so Lord we pray that in the midst of the present situation we are in you'd give us a great sense of confidence and courage in your hand and your ability to bring about your purposes. We pray, Lord, that you would bring healing and wisdom through doctors and specialists to provide the care and cure we need. We pray that you would show us how to be the church effectively loving one another well. Lord we pray you set us free from fear -- that we would not give in to fear in such a way that it leads us to anxiety or the need to be overly controlled. But Lord that we would submit to you and we would experience you being our present help in our time of trouble. We ask now as we open your word that you would teach us, speak to our hearts and lead us in accordance with your will in Jesus name. Amen.

So I want to make sure y'all have a Bible either on your app or somewhere. So if you need to pause and get a Bible, go ahead and do that. John 3:22 is where we're going to start today. And as we do that, I want to remind you that there are two Johns that we're going to be talking about. The first John is the John the evangelist John the gospel writer, John the one who God's Spirit inspired to author these words for us even today. And so that John speaking -- and he's going to reference John the Baptist. And we already talked about him a while ago -- John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner, as one to prepare the way of the Lord. He was crying out in the wilderness to return to God, to repent and to be baptized. And so we're going to look at that John as well as we look at this text.

Verse 22: After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside and remained there with them and was baptizing.

We're going to find out later, Jesus wasn't actually baptizing them. It was the disciples, Jesus' disciples who were doing the baptizing.

Verse 23: John -- John the Baptist -- also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized.

Verse 24: for John had not yet been put in prison.

He continues -- Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

Now, there's three different kinds of activities going on right now amongst God's people, the Jews, there's the Jewish rite of purification -- that's a normal way that they would follow God's law to continue to practice a ceremonial cleansing. The devout Jews were practicing this.

The second practice that they're going to be likely discussing is John's baptism, that he's been doing out in the wilderness.

And then the third now is this new guy on the scene, Jesus and his disciples and the baptism that's going on.

So, likely what's going on is this Jewish leader or this particular representative of the Jewish devout faith is beginning to ask the question of John's disciples, what's going on? And now what do you think of this other guy who's baptizing? And it leads them to have a bit of a discussion. Now we don't get to see what's behind the scenes, but because of the question we're going to see, we have a sense of an understanding that they're beginning to debate who really is the best, who really is doing it the right way.

Verse 26: They came to John -- this is his disciples -- and they said to him, "Rabbi," which again means teacher, "he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness -- for him to Jesus --

Look, he's baptizing and all are going to him. Now, don't you love the emotional exaggeration there? Cause we know they're not all going to Jesus cause some were still getting baptized by John. And so out of their emotional insecurity, their fear, they overstate the reality of what's going on. Isn't it amazing that you and I do that? We get into a situation, we're fearful, we're anxious, we're insecure and we overstate things because of our emotions.

One thing you can know whenever your emotional response to a particular situation doesn't match the nature of that situation, you're operating out of some other fear or insecurity that's deeper inside of you. A counselor that I've met with before would say it this way: We all hurt with the hurt of a thousand hurts.

In other words, when I show up with a particular kind of response, that's an over-exaggerated response to a situation that doesn't deserve that kind of response -- it's because there's something deeper in me. There's a, there's an insecurity, there's a fear, there's a wound, there's a past, there's a story that is informing the present situation in a way that leads me to have an over-exaggerated response.

Anybody experience that? I experience that quite often as God's still working on me and I believe that's what's going on here with John's disciples. The question we ought to ask is why?

Why are they responding with an emotionally exaggerated response to the situation that is happening in front of them?

Well, I would, I would basically guess, and I think most theologians would agree with this, this conjecture because it seems pretty clear from what is happening -- that they've gotten accustomed to kind of riding the bandwagon of John's kind of crowd. That a lot of people used to call John a crazy man hanging out in the wilderness with, with like animal hair all over him and eating locusts and honey and everyone thought he was just a wild man. And all of a sudden people start coming to him. Crowds start gathering around him. He's baptizing hundreds and hundreds of people. Everyone's talking about John and all the disciples of John I'm sure are sitting around going like, we're part of something now. We belong to something that everybody is talking about.

They become a big, big deal. And they're probably vicariously living through the kind of the bandwagon or the platform that God's given John in this moment.

We all love to be a part of something, don't we? We want to be a part of something successful and significant. That's in a lot of ways how we've been designed -- that we want to belong, but we want to belong to something that really matters.

Unfortunately, a lot of us because we want that so badly, we're willing to do whatever it takes to hitch up to the wagon or the star that will get us the greatest exposure to fame or credibility. In a lot of ways we like to vicariously live through the life of another. And that's what's going on with John's disciples.

Unfortunately I see this happen a lot with the church. A lot of times people want to be a part of a church that's "successful" - that has someone that's well known that seems to do really well. But the problem is what happens when the growth starts to slow down or when the success seems to wane or the church doesn't seem to be doing well anymore.

And the problem behind that is so many of us who see church as a kind of a vicarious identity or ego that we find ourselves connected to is that we can be part of a gathering -- we go, this is the place where I experienced God in such a way that it builds me up -- and I love that and that's great, but if we're not careful because we think of it as the way in which we find our sense of identity, then we look at all the other churches, we see them as competitors instead of the fact that we're on the same team.

And then we, if we're not careful, when we see another church go down and the people come to our church from their church, we start to celebrate -- instead of grieving what's going on. It's really sad because what happens is we start to think of ourselves as competitors in the kingdom of God. Which is what's going on with John and his disciples. They're beginning to compete against Jesus for fame and they're jealous.

I want to keep reminding us family that we are part of one church in the Puget Sound. That there is one head of that church and his name is Jesus. And this is not about our fame this about his fame. And the call is to think that way.

We have a great opportunity right now with what's happening to say what are we going to do as The Church to show what Jesus is like to the world in the way we love one another, serve each other and not give way to fear and also not give way to any competitive spirit whatsoever.

There's several churches I'm aware of in this region right now that are suffering. I was just with some pastors this last week and they were sharing their struggle and how they weren't doing so well as a church. I met with one --with two of them afterward and one particular church that's here on the Eastside that just started a year and a half ago. He had the courage -- I at one point I said to him, I said, you know you're such a good communicator that you communicate in such winsome ways that no one would ever know you're in need.

I'm just asking you to make your need known, cause we're here. We're one church. And he began to share with me the needs that their church is having, and he and his wife have kids -- all of his kids are on the spectrum and so he needs help with just watching kids so they can take a break. They're going to need some families maybe to step in for a season to help them get through a tough season ahead. And as he spoke I just kept thinking I could, I could either go, man, I'll pray for you, I hope things go really well or I could say no, we're on the same team we're not rivals here. We're working together to serve Jesus as one church.

Family, I expect that we're going to be asking some of you to start thinking through what it would look like if you were to help other churches, not just us in this next season. And I'm convinced what we're about to face is going to lead us to have to do that. It may be the greatest gift God gives us in what seems to be a horrible tragedy that we're going to get the opportunity to serve one another in ways that will make Jesus look really good in this region.

Now I want to stop and take this out of the concept of church and I want you to think about in the concept of your own person. I want you to ask this question as you think about your personal success, your popularity, your significance, where you find security, and I want you to ask, what am I attaching my ego to? What's the bandwagon I hook onto -- that gives me a sense of significance?

And then let's just imagine that that's gone. Let's imagine that you get eclipsed, like John the Baptist gets eclipsed. That some how a shadow comes over your sense of significance or presence.

Here's the reality -- no matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter what kind of gifts you have or influence you have -- one day your work and your life will be eclipsed. One day it will be. One day you will become less. The most successful, competent, powerful, famous person -- every one of us, no matter who you are, will one day asked to be asked to be less than we are today.

That's true of all of you. And those of us who are getting older are going to face that more quickly. But it's absolutely certain that you will be eclipsed and you will not be seen as as important as you used to be. And the question is what do you do with that?

Parents -- many of you already faced this, you became empty-nesters. And you realize there was a day when your kids looked up to you and you are the most significant person in their life, and then they met somebody and they got married and you were no longer that.

Is going to happen to everybody. So what do we do -- how do we face this idea that we will have to become less?

I was having a conversation with a guy who's a former NFL athlete and he played for the Seahawks, and he and I were talking about the majority of football players after they end their career -- in most careers in the NFL are maybe like one and a half years at best -- And he shared how the majority of the players when they leave the NFL go into a deep-dive depression. Because their entire identity was based upon people's applause -- how well they could perform, what people thought of them. And all of a sudden they have nobody paying attention whatsoever to them. And the majority of them go into a deep depression, get addicted to drugs or alcohol. If they were married, their marriages fall apart -- and many of them end up on the street homeless. So they might've had one or two years of fame and then they're nobody.

This guy that I was talking to, he said, When we meet with younger NFL players to try and prepare them for what's about to happen, we tell them the NFL stands for not for long. Not for long.

And that's really what's going on with John and his disciples. He's saying, I wasn't here to do this for long. This was a short term deal, I'm not here for me. And he knew how to respond to it because he understood where it came from. Listen to 27 as John answers:

A person cannot receive even one thing unless it's given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ but I had been sent before him.

See in order to face the reality of your future eclipse -- you becoming less, you feeling not as needed. In order for you to face that one day, you have to have a proper understanding of God's sovereignty in your vocation. You have to understand that the key to vocational peace in life is having an awareness of God's sovereignty, that a person cannot receive even one thing unless it's given to him from God.

See, God knows -- I'm sorry, John knows, that his vocation is not something he earned, it's not something he aspired to, it's not something he worked for. It was given. And he was given that vocation in the womb when God told him what it was going to be about through his mom, what his life would be given to.

And not only did he have the vocation given to him by God, but he had the influence given to him by God. God granted him favor.

Bruner says this about this tendency to have envy in our vocation or a place in life -- He says,

"The best antidote to envy is the conviction of the sovereignty of God. The places, successes and failures of our employments are under the sovereignty of a wise God. It's extremely comforting to know that what one has been given or has not been given in one's vocation is traceable not only to our abilities or disabilities, but even more to the providence of God. We would welcome each placement and employment and even displacement and unemployment with more gratitude and grace if we believe the Baptist's present maxim."

I don't have anything apart from what's been given to me by God.

See, John is not only aware of the sovereignty of God in his vocational calling and the favor he's been granted in it. But he also is content with who God says he is. That's enough for John. He knows he's not the Christ. He knows he just came for a very short term work. I mean, he doesn't get to have a very long work and we know later he gets put in prison and loses his head.

He knows who he is and he's okay being that.

Are you content being who God made you to be? Are you always comparing yourself to others?

I recently have been working through learning how to -- I'm just, some of you guys know I just turned 51 and yeah (audience clapping) there you go. And I want to be honest, like I -- when I heard people talk about midlife crisis, I always thought that'll never be me, and I don't know that it's a midlife crisis I'm going through, but I am telling you I'm learning to be okay being me. And it's not been easy learning how to be me.

Like there's parts of me that now I realize there's certain things I will never be, there's certain things I can't do. God hasn't given me the ability to do that, and I've had to struggle through accepting me for me. And It's not easy.

And there are certain things that I feel have eclipsed me -- other people who have done better than me at certain things in life. And if I don't learn how to be okay with who God made me be and the vocation he's given me to fulfill, then I will forever compare myself to other people, and live in a wretched place of discontentment. And I will not be free.

Are you content just being you? Not "just" -- getting to be you? And fulfill the call that God has for you? You're never going to truly experience rest, joy and peace in the station you're in if you're constantly comparing yourself to other people.

God made you. He knew what he was doing. He didn't make a mistake. He gave you what you have. He can raise you up or bring you down at any moment. And whatever he does is the best.

You know, one of the ways you can answer this question is how do you do when other people succeed and you don't?

William Law suggests that it's impossible to harbor animosity and jealousy towards someone else if we're actually praying for them. And so he offers this up -- he says,

"If someone is leaving you behind and you're becoming jealous and embittered, keep praying that he may have success in the very matter where he is awakening your envy" -- That's pretty smart.

"Keep praying that he would have success in the very matter in which he is awakening your envy; and whether he has helped or not, one thing is sure that your own soul will be cleansed and ennobled, that you will grow a little nearer to the stature of John the Baptist."

I would offer up another suggestion -- make a covenant with God that you're going to work hard at only saying good to the other person that you're struggling with, and/or say good about them with other people, but withhold anything that would tear them down.

I want to be honest, that is not easy. I will testify I struggle to do that. But I think it would really change the way I perceive people and myself if I learned how to do that more faithfully.

So here's what John did, he trusted God enough to believe that God would give John what God wants, when God wants and how God wants and whatever that is, he's going to be content with. How about you? How are you doing?

How do you do this?

Well, for John, he was able to do it because he learned to put his hope and his joy, not in his circumstances, but in Jesus and the work he was going to accomplish. Listen to what he says next --

Verse 29, 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. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

Now hear what he's saying. I don't have a job anymore. No one likes me. They're leaving me. They're going over to Jesus. I'm done.

It's almost like he's saying, I have no idea what my future's going to look like. John has no clue. He's done. And what is he saying?

I got joy.

Why does he have joy?

Because the aim of John's vocation was directed towards Jesus, not towards John. The aim of his vocation was directed to Jesus, not towards John.

William Barclay talks about this concept of the bridegroom in this particular day, and he says this,

"The friend of the bridegroom, the shoshben, has a unique place at a Jewish wedding. He acted as a liaison between the bride and the bridegroom. He arranged the wedding, he took out the invitations, he presided at the wedding feast. He brought the bride and the groom together, and then he had one very special duty. It was his duty to guard the bridal chamber."

Okay. So back in that day, after they had the feast, they would have this place where the bride would be waiting for the husband to come and they would consummate the marriage, right? But he brings them together and then he's guarding the chamber and he's not gonna let anybody else in except the groom, the bridegroom.

And so it's dark. He would hear the bridegroom's voice when he recognized it, he would open the door, let him in, and then he would say, I finished my work. And he would rejoice. Because he was protecting the bride for the bridegroom. He was keeping her set apart for the one and only, that the whole week was celebrating and he got to bring the finality to that celebration.

In the Hebrew scriptures, which we often call the Old Testament -- if you're not familiar with that, that's the Bible parts that are written before Jesus arrived. In the Hebrew scriptures in the old Testament, God's referred to as the Bridegroom. And his covenant people are the bride. Now what we have here in the story is Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming after his people, the bride, and then we find out that everybody that comes to faith in Jesus becomes the bride of Christ, which we call the church.

A lot of us know that, but there may be some of you that that's new for. So this imagery of the bridegroom and the bride is speaking of Jesus and all those who will come to faith in him as his church.

What John is saying, he's saying, I've only ever been about the wedding and preparing the bride for the bridegroom, and I'm finally there and my work is done.

And this word "joy" in the scriptures always is connected to a work completed, to a sense of fulfillment. And John's going, this is what I've been about my whole life. This is what I was born for.

This should be true of every one of us who is a Christian -- that we would look at our vocation, whatever job you're in. Some of you are still in school, some of you are out of school and you're just thinking about a career, some of you have been in a career for a long time, some of you are having a shift in your career. Every one of us should look at our vocation with the eyes that say, the aim of my vocation is the fame of Jesus.

The aim of my vocation is the fame of Jesus. I am doing this for him so that he might be glorified so that I might have great joy because that's why I'm here. That's my job.

Some of you are going, yeah, but my company has got a bottom line, Jeff. I know, but under the bottom line is this bottom line, that your job is to live for the fame of Jesus at your work. You should think about how you engage your work that way. What if the bottom line for me every day is to make Jesus famous? What if you engage school that way or sports that way or your activities that way that you say, In whatever I do, he must increase and I'm willing to decrease.

Does he have more of your heart -- than your job? Than your paycheck? popularity? What owns your heart? What's your ego connected to? What's the aim of what you do?

And you're going, Oh Jeff are you saying like, I have to be an evangelist at work? I'm saying, no, I'm, that's not what I'm saying, though in some ways I am.

But what I'm saying is, are you doing what you're doing in such a way that through your life Jesus looks better? People notice that he's alive and well in you. That everywhere you go it gets better because you're there with Jesus, making your aim of your vocation the fame of Jesus.

Are you doing in such a way that they would see his love, his beauty, his grace, his kindness? Are you going to work in such a way that you end your day and say, he looked so good through my life.

You know one the ways that you'll know that you're doing that? You'll know that the aim of your vocation is the fame of Jesus. People around you will increase as well. What I mean by that is they will get better. You'll serve them. You'll be more committed to their flourishing and not just your own at the cost of everyone else.

I love this quote by Bruner because I want to make sure it's clear when we give ourselves over to making the aim of vocation the fame of Jesus, not only do others get blessed, our companies will get blessed, but we get set free from the need to be noticed, appreciated, acknowledged.

And Bruner says it this way, "It is possible to be so consumed with Christ's increase that one can actually be content to be less significant oneself."

Can you say that's where you're at right now? It's okay if nobody knows. It's okay if I don't get the credit. It's okay if people don't notice, as long as He is more famous, people are more blessed, and the place I go gets to experience the fame of Christ in real action.

See, this idea of famous is not that Jesus is just known by name -- It's that they start to see what he's really like through your life. And they start to experience why you love him so much. And then you'll find that becoming less is actually the pathway for receiving more. Becoming less is actually a pathway for receiving more.

As you see yourself rightly and you see Jesus rightly, you'll have no problem decreasing so that he might increase -- because you know that as he increases more and more in your life, you actually receive more, not less. That's how it works.

In the economy of the Kingdom God, when you become less and he becomes more, you get more by him being more. In other words, the way to think about it is: less is more always with Jesus.

You try to be more, I promise you, you will become less. You'll become less.

Less fully human, less fully free, less full of joy, less full of love. You will become less if you seek to become more -- but if you decide for Jesus' fame that you want to become less so that he might become more, you'll receive more as a result of it.

Listen to what John says,

He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way -- referring to himself and us -- He who comes from heaven -- referring to Jesus -- is above all.

Notice Jesus -- John has a very right perspective of this whole deal, like we're nothing compared to him. Why would we even want to try to compete? Why would we even want to be more?

Verse 32, He bears witness to what he has seen and heard --Jesus does -- yet no one receives his testimony. Verse 33, Whoever receives this testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

Here's the reality, Jesus came to tell you and to show you the very reality of what God is actually like -- to show us who God the father is. He's the only one, Jesus is the only one who gets to tell us this, cause he's the only one who perfectly knows him, was with him, eternally knows God the father, and so he can come and say, let me give you a witness of what he's actually like.

Another way of saying it, he is THE definitive voice in the Supreme testimony about God and if you receive and believe what Jesus says, you actually affirm the very truth of what God is like. That's what he's saying. When you agree with Jesus, you're right. When you disagree with Jesus, you're absolutely wrong about what God's like.

John says it this way earlier in chapter 1 verse 18,

No one has ever seen God but the one and only Son who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the father. He has made him known.

Bultmann says this, a theologian named Bultmann says, "Whoever denies God's truth in his revelation, Jesus, also denies the reality of God, which manifests itself in the Revelation, and indeed only in the Revelation. He who does not believe in the revealer, Jesus, denies God, even if he theoretically recognizes the existence of God."

In other words, what he's saying is if you reject Jesus, you reject God. That's how it works. So I know we live in a very pluralistic society that says there's many ways to God. Jesus doesn't

agree with that -- to be clear -- he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.

And Jesus says, I get to speak with that authority because the Father gave me all of it. I have the authority to say what is true and what is not.

Now, I said it last week... I hope that you believed it and heard it, that God the Father loves sinners, and that he so loved the world that he gave the Son. But I want to take a little further this week in light of this text -- in giving the Son, God is also giving us with Jesus everything that belongs to the Son. Don't, don't miss that -- in giving us the Son, he is giving us with Jesus all that belongs to the Son.

And Jesus just said here, God, the Father has given me everything. He's not held anything back. And that's why Jesus goes on further and says, Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

See, becoming less -- in other words, making it not about me, but the fame of Jesus; stop trusting in my works and my word, but trust in his work, in his word -- that leads the path of receiving everything that Jesus has. That everything the Father has given the Son, by my faith in Him -- which last week we said to believe is to entrust your life into, to entrust your life and into is to say, Jesus' life is now my life.

And when you say that, you're giving up yourself, but you're gaining Jesus, as a result. That's a pretty remarkable exchange. And when you give up yourself, you get far greater than you had in the beginning.

And that's what John wants to make really clear. If you decrease that he might increase. If you put your faith in Jesus word and his work more than any other, including your own, you will have all the treasures and the riches of eternal life given to you to now, today and forever. Less really is more with Jesus.

But, this is what he says, and this is just like last week -- He woos us to himself with but then he warns us: Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

I noticed that he didn't say, whoever doesn't believe in the Son -- earlier he said, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life and now he says, whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. He wants us to see the equation here, that to believe in Jesus is not just to have notional assent to agree about what he says, but it's to put the whole of my life into his life, to the degree at which I submit to everything he says, and I'm willing to do anything he says, which is why I can then face my vocation and say, at the end of the day, this is not about me. This is about Him.

And what's beautiful about this, is he's saying, if you will believe in Him, which leads to obeying Him, you'll get life abundant, everlasting, deep life. But if you don't, if you don't obey, if you do

not believe, if you refuse to believe what he says, if you reject his very word about himself and about God, you shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on you.

Remember last week I said that if we reject the Son, if we don't believe in the son, then we stand condemned already. "Condemned" what does that mean? Condemned by what? Condemned with what? Why am I condemned? Why do I need saving?

Well, I'm being saved from the wrath of God, from my sinful rebellion. I know that that's not a popular thing to say, but it's a biblical thing to say. Paul says it very clearly in Romans 1 verse 16 to 18,

I am not ashamed of The Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

A lot of times we just end there, but we need to keep reading. Verse 18 --

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

The rest of the letter to the church in Rome, Paul begins to describe what sin does and how it distorts our mind and leads us to darkened thinking and rebellious ways and ultimately destruction in our relationships and in this world.

Paul then goes on to talk about how God has come to not only reveal our rebellion, but to reveal the righteousness of Jesus to save us from our rebellion. He goes on to describe that Jesus came not only to show us the Father's love, but to show us the Father's love by being willing to die for sinners.

He shows us that Jesus' life and complete submission and obedience is what righteousness looks like. At the very life of Jesus, the very obedience of Jesus, the very submission of Jesus to the Father is the righteousness of God revealed.

And so as we look at the life of Christ and we see what it means to live as an image bearer of God, we all know that we've fallen short. The Bible calls that sin.

And Jesus doesn't come just to reveal the wrath of God, and reveal the righteousness of God in his own behavior and obedience, but he also comes to reveal the means by which we can then be made righteous before God.

That as we say, I want to become less, want to stop trusting my works -- bad or good. I want to trust only in the works of Jesus, the only righteousness that God will accept.

That in a sense what I'm doing is I'm not just putting my belief in him, but I'm entrusting my entire life in him. And what happens is we get the very righteousness of God as our

righteousness through Jesus Christ. And the good news of the gospel is that as I decrease, he increases, which means his righteousness becomes my righteousness.

Not only am I forgiven through his death on the cross for my sins, but the righteousness of God that is revealed in Christ is given to me as a gift by my faith in Christ. And therefore, when God looks at me, he doesn't see me anymore. He sees Jesus.

I must decrease so that he will increase. And as I decrease, I get more. I get him.

I wonder if we're willing to become less so that we could have more? We're willing to make the aim of our vocation the fame of Jesus -- if we're willing to recognize that accepting God -- God's word about who we really are instead of trying to be something the world wants us to be is something we're really willing to embrace.

See, at the heart of our rebellion against God is really just pride. And us saying like, God, I could have done it better than you. I could have picked a better life than you gave me. I could've picked a better job than you offer me. I think I could have figured out this world a whole lot better than you have.

And so we live with envy and covetousness and fear and insecurity cause we think we'd do a better job than God does himself.

Let me ask you this. How have you been perceiving yourself and your vocation? Do you see it as a gift from God? Are you content with who he's made you to be? The place he's putting you in, and the opportunities he has given you.

And as you think about your vocation, your calling, your present situation, what's been the aim of your vocation? Has it been the fame of Christ? Are you enslaved to needing the approval of others still? Wanting to be made much of yourself.

And let me ask this last question: Where do you need to decrease today so that He might increase?

Where in your life are you striving? Where's your aim off? Where's your lack of confidence in God's sovereignty leading you to envy, fear, insecurity, and over-exaggerated emotion to situations that don't really require it?

I'd like to just give you an opportunity to ask God that question right now. Let's take a moment, bow your heads -- in your house, wherever you're at -- I know that might seem more awkward with a smaller group, but just take a moment just to bow your heads, close your eyes, say,

God, what has been the aim of my vocation? Your fame or mine?

Where are you calling me to decrease so that you might increase?

Father, I confess at times that I strive. That I don't always have an open-handed approach to your calling on my life. But I want to confess out loud that your way is better than mine. Your thoughts are higher than mine. That you've given gifts and opportunities to all of us that we don't deserve and you know what you're doing. You're a good God.

And we thank you that ultimately Jesus was willing to become less so that we could become more. He was willing to give up so that we could be lifted up from the pit of our sin. Thank you.

And so Jesus, we pray you teach us how to become less so that you can become more in our life. We want our jobs to be for your fame, not ours.

Show us, Lord, how to better represent you by dying to our self for your glory and not ours. We pray that you'd help us, in Jesus name. Amen.

So at this time would love for you guys to take the digital liturgy guide and just follow the steps along the way as we've put them forth. We pray that you will have a time of fellowship around these truths, and I wanna encourage you to realize that we don't need to be in a building or with a whole lot of people to have the same experience of the Spirit of God working in and through our time together. So invite Him into this. Engage Him presently as you go through these things together.