

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

John 3:22-36

Message Purpose: As we look at a conversation between John the forerunner of Christ and his disciples, we will touch on the topics of being self-centered and humility. In John we see a great example of humility. If we are to follow his example of humility we must also see and exalt Jesus as he does. We must...must see Jesus as revealed in scripture. In the passage today, we see Jesus the Bridegroom with incredible love for his bride. We also see Jesus as the one who has Authority over all.

Exalt Jesus – Lift him high, behold him, worship him, honor him, cherish him, obey him.

Read: John 3:22-36

Outline:

- Introduction
- Self-centered Disciples - vv. 25-26
- A Humble Leader - vv. 27-31
- Jesus is Exalted - vv. 29-35
 - Bridegroom – Incredible Love
 - Authority – All Authority
- Two Choices – Remain as you are or Believe & Obey – v. 36

Introduction:

- The Gospel according to John – addresses man’s greatest need
 - All have sinned. The penalty for sin is death. The death sentence upon us is God’s judgment - eternal separation and His just punishment for our rebellion against Him - a Holy & Righteous & Just God.
 - Our greatest need is life. A pardon, a renewed relationship with Him.
 - John 20:31, “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
- John the Baptist
 - *John 1:6-8, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.”*
- Baptism
 - *Acts 19:4, “And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.””*
 - Demonstrated their desire and need for cleansing from sin.
 - Different from New Testament Church – identification with Christ’s death and resurrection.

- Timing of Events
 - Early in Christ's ministry (relatively short period of overlap) prior to John's imprisonment and beheading by Herod Antipas, whom John condemned for taking the wife of his half-brother Herod-Phillip (Mathew 14)

Self-Centered Disciples – vv. 25-26

- Rabbi – Title of respect. Used for Jewish religious teachers
 - Title of "Rabbi" used for John, but not for Jesus.
 - *Matthew 3:5, "Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him"*
 - Are you Elijah or the Prophet?
- "**He** who was **with you** across the Jordan"
 - John's Proclamation
 - *John 1:29, "Behold, the **Lamb of God**, who **takes away the sin of the world!**"*
 - *John 1:33, "this is **he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit**"*
 - *John 1:34, "this is the **Son of God**"*
 - *John 1:35-37, "the next day...two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus" – One of them was Andrew, Peter's brother.*
 - Identified Jesus as being with John rather than John with Jesus
 - Didn't connect the dots - this is who John was continually bearing witness to
- Concern – "*All are going to him*" – Essentially – This isn't right!
- Issue
 - Self Centered – If they all go to him, what are we going to do?
 - Pride is sneaky. It looks to cloak itself with a noble purpose, but it seeks self satisfaction even with good things.
 - Focused on following a man rather than following after Christ

Question: Is it possible to do good things with the wrong motive?

- Ephesus - Revelation 2 – Your works, toil, patient endurance, cannot bear with evil, tested those who call themselves apostles, enduring patiently – But I have this against you, that **you have abandoned the love you had at first**. – Remember and Repent. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand
 - Christ is not just interested in the outward actions but the motives of your heart.

- David recognized the Lord's requirement - *Ps. 51:16-17, "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."*

Question: Is it good to follow another man?

- Corinthian Church - *I Corinthians 3:4-7, "For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*
- Godly examples are a gift from God. The examples must lead us to Christ
 - *I Cor. 11:1, Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*
 - *Phil. 3:17, Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.*
 - *1 Tim. 4:12, Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*
 - *Heb. 13:7, Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*
 - *1 Pet. 5:2-3, Shepherd the flock of God . . . not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

What they thought was bad news for John was actually received as good news by him. He rejoiced at what they told him, but also taught them important lessons.

A Humble Leader - John's Response - vv. 27-31

- Humility
 - v. 27 – Recognizes that God is sovereign – He is the One that gives
 - v. 28 – I have been sent
 - v. 29 - Friend of the Bridegroom – The Best Man – service
 - "This joy of mine is now complete"
 - **Vs. 30 - "He must increase, but I must decrease"**
 - Vs. 31 – "He who is of the earth belongs to the earth"

Transition Question: How do we follow this pattern of humility?

- It is not a focus on self-abasement.

- Although we must recognize our sinfulness, state of spiritual poverty, shortcomings and weakness. A focus on this is still a focus on self, which leads to self-righteousness and legalism.
- It is also not just a focus on others.
 - We must guard against being “people pleasers” and always striving for the approval of others.
- We must set our minds on the exaltation of Christ.
 - Only in this do we find our proper place
 - Created in the image of God. Redeemed to live in the image of Christ.

Jesus is Exalted

- **Bridegroom - v. 29**
 - Personal / intimate loving relationship
 - Profound mystery – Christ and his Church – *Eph. 5:25-32*
 - Christ loved the church and gave himself for her
 - Nourishes and cherishes the church
 - Jesus is the one who loves, leads, and provides perfectly
 - We should then be faithful in this relationship with him. We must not commit spiritual adultery against the one we are betrothed to.
 - Recognizing this incredible love is very humbling. I don’t deserve it!
- **Authority – v. 31**
 - **Authority because of where he comes from, what he knows, who sent him, who he is and what has been given to him**
 - v. 31 - He who comes from above is above all
 - Jesus stepped into time and space to Glorify the Father and redeem his people
 - He is God incarnate
 - v. 32 - He bears witness to what he has seen and heard
 - First hand knowledge
 - He knows God the Father better than anyone else
 - v. 34 - Sent from God, utters God’s words
 - He carries out the will of God the Father
 - v. 34 - Given the Spirit without measure
 - The Spirit came upon him completely

- This reading is consistent with the passage which identifies what the Father gives to the Son
- v. 35 - The Father loves the Son
 - “This is my beloved Son – Listen to Him!”
- v. 35 - The Father has given all things into his hand
 - *Ps. 110:1, “The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool”*
 - ***Col. 1:16-18, “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.”***

Two Choices – v. 36

For those who have not yet followed after Christ

- Remain as you are or follow after Christ – Believe in him and demonstrate this in obedience to him.
- Illustration – Road
 - We are not on a road called “Innocence” and we come to a fork and must choose between the road of “Life” and the road of “Death”
 - We are on the road of death and by God’s mercy and grace, we come to and choose the road of “Life”
- 1. Remain – ***the wrath of God remains on him***
- 2. Choose - Believe & Obey
 - Believe – Place confidence in. Reliance upon, not mere credence. Faith alone in Christ alone.
 - Obey – text uses the negative – “not obey” – to not obey, to be disobedient
 - *John 14:1-6, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**”*

For those who have believed and obey Christ

- Evaluate.
- Renew and strengthen efforts to exalt Christ.

- The byproduct – self-focus falls away and humility is grows but only when Christ is appropriately exalted.
- From your corporate scripture reading this morning:
 - *Psalm 115:1, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"*
 - *Psalm 115:18, "But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!"*