
JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

JOY IN THE ONE ABOVE ALL

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on April 23, 2017

INTRODUCTION

How can you increase your joy? Well, now... That is a good question. It is also a question that many ask and many answer quite differently. Some say you need more stuff or better experiences; some say you need only to look within. The wise person, however, does not seek to answer the most pressing questions with mere opinion or subjectivity. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself, and there we find His objective word on the matter. In our passage, we meet a man with complete and transcendent joy. We shall investigate the source of his joy and what we may learn from this example.

JOHN 3:22-36 (ESV)

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison).

25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 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.***"

27 John answered, "***A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.** 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'*

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.** 30 **He must increase, but I must decrease.***"

31 **He who comes from above is above all.** He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY:

Joy will only be found in Christ's increase. So, let us lose ourselves in Him!

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) WHY DOES JOHN MENTION THIS EPISODE HERE?**
- (2) JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO JOHN; THEREFORE, JESUS MUST INCREASE**
- (3) THE COUNTERINTUITIVE NATURE OF INCREASING JOY**
- (4) HOW MIGHT THIS HELP US WITH PERSPECTIVE TODAY?**

MESSAGE

(1) WHY DOES JOHN MENTION THIS EPISODE HERE?

- It Seems John intends for the reader to understand: "JESUS IS BETTER!"
 - Jesus is better than the inadequate bridegroom of 1st Century Judaism (2:1-11).
 - Jesus is better than a comfortable 'do-it-yourself' religious system (2:12-22).
 - Jesus is better than ceremonial washing, for He provides spiritual rebirth from God Himself (3:1-13).
 - Jesus is better than the types of the Old Testament – especially the serpent (3:14-15).
 - Jesus is better than self-preservation, because His light brings loving freedom (3:16-21)
 - Now, John is telling us, Jesus is better than John the Baptist – who is the best man to ever live before that day (Matt. 11:11).

(2) JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO JOHN; THEREFORE, JESUS MUST INCREASE

6 ways Jesus is Superior to John

1 from the Baptist, and 5 from the Gospel writer

One John the Baptist's own testimony:

1. Jesus is '**the Christ**,' and John is not
 - *"I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'" (v28)*
 - Believe

Five from John the Gospel writer:

2. Jesus is '**from heaven**' and '**above all**,' and John is 'earthly'
 - *"He who comes from above is above all... He who comes from heaven is above all" (v31).*
3. Jesus '**speaks the words of God**,' and John merely testifies about Christ
 - *"32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard... 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God," (v32, 34).*
 - John was "*sent from God*" (Jn. 1:6) to "*bear witness about*" Christ (Jn. 1:7)
4. Jesus '**gives the Spirit without measure**,' and John is empowered by the Spirit for a certain task
 - *"he gives the Spirit without measure" (v34)*
5. Jesus is '**the Son of God**' and possesses '**all things**,' and John is just a man
 - *"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (v35)*
6. Jesus is '**the possessor of life**,' and John is a created and mortal thing
 - *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." (v36)*

Jesus is Superior! Therefore, **He must increase**, and John must decrease!

- John the Baptist uses the **parable of a bride and bridegroom**
 - *“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**”***

4 questions:

1. Who is the “bride”?
2. Who is the “friend of the bridegroom”?
3. Who is the “bridegroom”?
4. What does it mean to “rejoice greatly at the bridegroom’s voice”?

1. Who is the “bride”?

- The “bride” is the innumerable sum of all who trust/love Christ.
 - Paul speaks of the “husband-wife” relationship of Christ to “the Church”
 - *“**Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish**” (Eph. 5:25–27).*
 - Do we read about Christ accomplishing this goal anywhere?
 - YES! Revelation 21:9–11 – John wrote his vision, *“**Then came one of the seven angels... saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...**”*

2. Who is the “friend of the bridegroom”?

- The “friend of the bridegroom” is John the Baptist.
 - John is the one “baptizing with water” (Jn. 1:26), preparing people to receive “the Lord” (Jn. 1:23) by symbolically washing them clean or “purifying” them (Jn. 3:25).

3. Who is the “bridegroom”?

- The “bridegroom” is Christ!
 - Jesus Christ is the heavenly “husband” who “gave Himself up for” His bride (Eph. 5:25). Christ has “sanctified” his bride and “cleansed her” from sin and shame (Eph. 5:26).
 - Christ has promised to “present” His bride to Himself in “splendor” and “holiness” (Eph. 5:27).

4. What does it mean to “rejoice greatly at the bridegroom’s voice”?

- The sound of His voice means He is HERE!
 - My beloved One is here!
 - The One who loves me so is here!
 - It is with this perspective that many have read the Song of Solomon... as a bride and bridegroom anticipating their union.
 - Consider the anticipation the Church has for Christ in this poetic way - *“**The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: ‘Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come...**”* (SoS 2:8–12)
 - John said, *“Therefore **this joy of mine is now complete**”* (v29).

(3) THE COUNTERINTUITIVE NATURE OF INCREASING JOY

- Get or Do More
 - In one sense, there is less of this today... People are recognizing the emptiness of merely material or experiential happiness.
 - Yet, the economy of America still runs primarily on the assumption that you will be compelled to buy a product or service because of your desire for more.
 - And there are still self-help gurus ready to send you towards a pursuit of more...
 - Sonya Derian, writing at a website called *Tiny Buddha* said, “Take a trip... Have a party... Go to the gym... Walk your dog... Go canoeing... Get out of town...”¹
- You are Awesome
 - Joy – *either the substance or the tools to achieve it* – is in you
 - Dr. Robert Holden, creator of the ‘Happiness Index’ said, “You will increase your happiness score significantly if you can begin to accept that the happiness you hope ‘to get’ after you find your true partner, get the dream job, buy the ideal home and earn the right money, is **already in you.... Joy** is the organic state of your soul. It is not something you achieve; it **is something you accept...** [presumably something you already possess – because you are awesome].”²
- Joy is outside of you, in Christ
 - John’s joy is based on something outside of himself and his situation!
 - **First**, Let’s remember who John the Baptist is...
 - His **preaching platform** was “**the wilderness**” (Matt. 3:1).
 - His **wardrobe** was one long shirt, made of camel hair (Matt. 3:4).
 - His **primary meal** was locusts and honey (Matt. 3:4).
 - His only **message** was, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**” (Matt. 3:2)! Which means, “**Turn from your evil**”

¹ Article at: <http://tinybuddha.com/blog/8-ways-to-increase-your-joy-factor/>

² Article at: <http://www.oprah.com/spirit/10-ways-to-increase-your-happiness#ixzz4epGE4URB>

ways, and beg God for forgiveness, because He is coming to judge you!”

- ***After playing his important role*** as Christ’s first earthly human witness, ***John was murdered*** at the request of a brutal king’s niece (Matt. 14:10-11).
 - In fact, John the Gospel writer tells us (v24) that John the Baptist “*had not yet been put in prison...*”
 - John’s arrest and beheading was only a few months away from this exchange!
 - By all worldly measurements, John was an utter failure.
 - But, John’s identity was not in worldly success; it was in Christ.
- **Second**, Let’s peer into the features of John’s joy
 - *3 things I see about John’s joy in this passage*
 1. His joy is “complete” or “full” (*plēroō*)
 - Such is the kind of joy for which we all hope.
 2. His joy is a current possession – The joy is “his”
 - “Complete” joy is only a benefit to those who possess it
 3. His joy is in Christ’s nearness and sovereignty
 - Nearness: “*The friend... rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.*” (v29).
 - Sovereignty: “*A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven*” (v27).
 - John feels perfectly joyful in his own obscurity and loss, because all is as it should be...
 - Christ is near and He is in charge!

Major Point: Joy will only be found in Christ’s increase.

(4) HOW MIGHT THIS HELP US WITH PERSPECTIVE TODAY?

- Individually
 - Are you joyful?
 - Do you feel a pull towards fulfillment in stuff and/or experiences?
 - Doesn't the past track record help us correct this?
 - Do you regularly turn inward in your search for joy?
 - Aren't we continually frustrated by this search?
 - Is Christ near to you?
 - Well, have you love for Christ? Do you trust Him as Redeemer and Friend?
 - If so, then you are united to Him; He loves you; and God has promised to glorify Himself in your spiritual development (Jn. 15:7-9)!
 - Moreover, Christ is your bridegroom!
 - You are betrothed to the King of kings and the Lord of lords! Oh, what joy there is here for those who will dwell on such things.
 - Is Christ sovereign?
 - Do you know that this King of glory is now the ruler of all?
 - Christ is not the doormat of the universe... He is the one upon the highest throne.
 - While we struggle to understand how and why, the fact is that all is right now exactly as Christ commands. This chaotic world is under His rule now, and He will bring all things to their God-glorifying end.

- Church Family
 - Is Christ the focus here? Does the bridegroom's voice make us joyful?
 - While there are always flaws among the people of God on this side of glory, the joy-inducing nearness of Christ is what drives us here.
 - Do we trust Christ to "build His church"?
 - He has promised to do so (Matt. 16:18), and a person cannot receive one thing unless it comes from God (Jn. 3:27).

Major Point: Joy will only be found in Christ's increase.

So, let us lose ourselves in Him!

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

The Intense Joy of Exalting Christ and Humbling Yourself by Brian Evans

<https://gccwaverly.net/2016/05/16/sermon-the-intense-joy-of-exalting-christ-and-humbling-yourself-john-322-36/>

He Must Increase, I Must Decrease by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/he-must-increase-i-must-decrease>

Jesus is Superior to John by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-19/jesus-is-superior-to-john>