

John 1:19-34

- Once again we will be looking into the life of John the Baptist (not John the Disciple, Author). If you remember JTB was a relative of Jesus and his father Zachariah was a Priest and rather than following in the footsteps of his father, God had something else in store for him.
- He became a prophet of God (one who spoke to the people on God's behalf), and up until this point there had not been a prophet of God in over 400 years!
- John doesn't end up being your typical prophet, he moved out into the desert, wore clothes made of camel skin, and we are told he lived off of honey and bugs! Sounds like either a homeless man or a hippy.
 - However, what was far more important than what he looked like was the message that he had to tell the World, that Jesus was coming and that He would come to take away the sins of the world!

Vs 19-23

- At this time John had actually become a popular person, people were fascinated by him and would travel from all around to hear him preaching in the desert.
- News of him reached the higher Jewish officials in Jerusalem, "hey there is this crazy guy in the desert claiming to be a prophet of God, huge crowds are gathering around him, maybe we should check it out?"
- So they sent a group of guys to go question him a bit because apparently people had begun to think JTB was the Messiah, the one who would overthrow all the injustice that was happening at the time; they thought he would do this with God's power and Spirit. All the Jews were looking for this Messiah, who would free them from the oppression of the Roman rule. They ask John if he is this Messiah... John says no!
- Other people thought he might be Elijah who was a great prophet in the OT who we are told was transported directly to heaven without even dying first, people thought John may actually be Elijah who had come back to earth. They ask... John says no!
- Finally they ask are you THE prophet? Who was a prophet they were looking forward to that would come and explain the ways of God to them and help them to get themselves out of the mess in which they currently found themselves in...John says no!
- This group of Priests and Levites were now getting desperate and said "Hey John give us something to work with! We can't go back to our boss empty handed, tell us something about who you are!"
- John's response.... "I am no one", "Im not important" " a guy yelling in the desert"
 - "John the Baptist saw his role in terms of preparing the people for the coming Messiah, removing obstacles from people's minds regarding the Messiah, urging them to "make straight the way for the Lord." The roads in that day were

bumpy and uneven, mostly made of dirt and rocks. When a king or ruler would come into an area, people would go before him who would clear the roads of obstacles. They would push the rubble away and fill in any holes so the king's chariot could make its way smoothly through the dirt streets. Others would level the road so people could get a good view of the king. That's how John understood his job. He was preparing the way for the Messiah."

- So John answers this way because he was just setting the stage for someone else (Jesus). He was perfectly ok with the spotlight not being on himself, When the priest's asked him who he was, there was a number of things he could have said that would have made himself look good.. I am a prophet, chosen and called by God, I am the one who Isaiah prophesied about...the list goes on. He could have said these things but he didn't because he wanted to make sure the spotlight was on Jesus.
- For those of us as Christians here is an important question for us: Are we willing to be like JTB and humble ourselves so that Jesus can get all the glory?
 - We have a tendency to desire recognition in the things that we do, we like to build a name for ourselves, which isn't always a bad thing. But as Christians when we are doing things for God, no matter what it is, its important that we always make God the hero of the story. Because he IS the Hero, not us!
- PERSONAL STORY

Vs 24-28

- JTB is now questioned by another religious group of Jews called the Pharisees, these were the religious experts of that day. They dedicated their lives to studying the law (First 5) and trying to keep it all the regulations that were within it, they were complete fanatics about it as well. Quick to judge and point out the mistakes of others and they always had excuses for why sometimes laws didn't apply to them.
- So these men come to John because they hear that he is baptizing not only gentiles (those who weren't jewish) but jews as well.
 - The people in that day were very familiar with baptism however for the Jewish people they would only baptize Gentiles who wanted to become Jewish. It signified being cleansed from their old way of life to now follow the one true God.
 - For John to start baptizing both Gentiles and Jews would have caused an uproar because it was putting them on the same level. The jewish people looked down on the Gentiles because they worshipped false Gods and generally lived immoral lives.
 - However when the jews were choosing to be Baptized by JTB they realized that deep down inside they were the same way, they weren't as good as they thought they were, they worshipped false Gods in their heart, things like money, prestige, power and it caused them to recognize that the way they were living

was not up to the standard that God had set. It was a true sign of repentance for them to be baptized, it showed they too wanted a new start.

- The baptisms that John was performing were in preparation for the coming of Jesus. It was symbolic of the people's need to repent and of their need of a savior/ messiah to cleanse them of their sins.
- John's baptism was only with water, which of course can make someone clean but it cannot keep a person clean. However with the coming of Jesus we are told that he will baptize with water and the Holy Spirit, and so his baptism will go an extra step and help us to live a life in the power that Jesus would give.
 - I remember when I became a Christian, thinking about all the things in my life that I knew I needed to get rid of and feeling just completely overwhelmed. I knew I couldn't keep doing drugs and drinking all the time, that there were certain people that I couldn't hang out with anymore because we always got into trouble when we were together.... And on top of all that there was a multitude of internal things like hate, anger, self-centeredness, and so on.
 - And I just thought "how am I going to be able to make all these changes, I didn't think it was possible." However that was because I thought I had to make all these changes myself, in my own strength. But that was not true, I had Jesus by my side the whole time and also the Holy Spirit inside of me helping me to let go of those things. (Immanuel).

(27)

- John knew that Jesus wasn't like everyone else, but that he was the coming Messiah and John said that he wasn't even worth to untie Jesus' sandals.
- That may sound strange to us, but back then all the roads were dirty and people mainly got around by walking and so often times before a person would enter a house they would have their sandals taken off and feet cleaned. This was often a job given to the lowest servant in the house because well, no one wanted to do it, it was a nasty job.
- However, John considers himself not even worth enough to do that for Jesus. "WE'RE NOT WORTHY!" Wayne's World
- JTB saw the big picture of who Jesus was and just how great he was. This is something that the author of this book wants us to see as well.
 - Because for those who read this book who aren't Christians he wants to show them that Jesus wasn't just a normal guy, he was the son of God, who came to take away the sins of the world, to make it possible for us to once again be in a relationship with God. But in order for that to happen a price needed to be paid for our sin, Jesus paid that price with his life by dying on the cross for us. That of course is huge, something we will see more of in the next verses.

- For those who read this book and are Christians John doesn't want us to ever forget what Jesus did for us, he wants us to have a big view of who Christ is because that will drastically change the way we live our lives.
- If I have a small view of who Jesus is then I limit what he can do in and through me but If I have a big view then of course he begins to influence more areas of my life and a greater change begins to take place within me.
- When we begin to realize just how Great Jesus is it causes us to want to talk about him more, it spurs us on to be more like JTB to constantly point people to Jesus because HE IS WORTHY.

29-34

Vs 29-31

- So now it's the day after and we actually see Jesus enter into the story as he goes to where JTB is and when John sees him the first thing that comes out of his mouth is "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World"
- He used the phrase "Lamb of God" to describe who Jesus is, this is something that would have resonated with the original readers, throughout the Bible lambs play an important role. Here are a few examples, notice the progression.
 - In Genesis, as Abel brought a lamb for sacrifice, we see a lamb offered for an individual. In Exodus, as each household sacrificed a lamb during Passover, we see a lamb offered for a family. In Leviticus, when the people of Israel were instructed to sacrifice a lamb, we see a lamb offered for a nation. In John, as the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, we see a Lamb who would be offered for the world. In the book of revelation we are told that John sees what its like in Heaven and when he sees Jesus there he says "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, at the center of the throne,".
- John being the son of a priest would have known better than most that every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed at the temple, it was done to make atonement for the sins of the people.
 - John is stating that Jesus would be the one who would become the sacrifice of atonement for the whole world, it was a once and for all thing. Because his sacrifice would be far greater than that of any regular lamb.
 - With the blood of lambs they needed to daily be sacrificed because they never really dealt with the core problem, they offered nothing that could keep us from sinning. However with Jesus he gets to the root of the issue, he deals with the desires and motives of the heart that causes us to sin.
 - I think its worth mentioning again that this was available to the whole world, for my sins, your sins, for everyones sins, they have ALL been paid for. There will never be an occasion where someone sins and Jesus says ".....actually, that one wasn't covered".

- The Bible makes it very clear that we are all sinners, it's in our nature and it causes us to be separated from God. It also says the wages of sin is death, of eternal separation from God, however the good news is that Jesus came to pay the price of sin by dying on the cross for us and because of that our debt has been paid!

- “We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” - Tim Keller

- No doubt JTB announces this message of the coming lamb with great joy
- He goes on to say that this is the person he has been talking about all along, he is finally here!

Vs 32-34

- John reveals to us that though he was looking for the messiah, he actually didn't know who it was going to be, all he knew was that he was coming soon. However we are told that the Holy Spirit revealed to John that Jesus was actually the Messiah.
- John now reflects back on when Jesus was baptized.
- John says the Spirit descends on Jesus, like a dove, which also has deep rooted symbolism. Some have pointed out that the dove symbolizes; purity, innocence, and meekness, while others see the dove conveying the graciousness of God's Spirit. John's Jewish readers would have recognized the dove as a symbol of hope. (Noah and the Dove) All of these attributes are found in Jesus!
- The spirit came upon Jesus and it remained with him, which was completely unheard of, in the OT the HS would come upon people to perform certain tasks and then leave (Samson) but we see with Jesus it's entirely different.
 - “God the Holy Spirit comes in a friendly form, as an innocent dove, which of all birds is the most friendly and has no wrath or bitterness in it. He comes as a dove, as a sign that he would not be angry with us, but that he desires to help us through Christ, that we may be saved.” —Martin Luther

Titus 3:5-7

But when *d*the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** he saved us, *e*not because of works done by us in righteousness, but *f*according to his own mercy, by *g*the washing of regeneration and *h*renewal of the Holy Spirit, **6** whom he *i*poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that *j*being justified by his grace we might become *k*heirs *l*according to the hope of eternal life.

- Coming back to the baptism of Jesus, we have looked before how the people who were getting baptized, were doing so because it was a sign that they recognized their sinful hearts, but we know Jesus went through life without sin, and so for him,

his motivations were entirely different, he did it because he wanted to identify with sinners, he wanted to show that he knew what it was like to be human.

- In the Gospel of Matthew we are told something else, that when Jesus was baptized the voice God the father from heaven said “This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”. There is just a great picture of the trinity.
- John then goes on to tell us that he was merely baptizing people with water, however, now Jesus had arrived and he was going to baptize people with the Holy Spirit, so now not only would there be the initial cleansing from sin but there would be this same force that worked in the life of Jesus available in the lives of those who become Children of God to help and guide them through life! This is exactly what you see happening in Act 2, the Holy Spirit filling and empowering those early Christians not only for ministry but for everyday life as well.
 - I think this is key to remember, especially for us as Christians, that the same power that was active throughout the bible, in the life of Christ and his followers, that enabled them to do all the various miracles and great things we see happen in the NT is still alive today and available to us in the person of the HS, not only for the big things like miracles but the everyday things as well. In other passages in scripture the Holy Spirit is often called The Helper and the comforter that is exactly what he wants to do in our lives, he wants to help us and comfort us in times of need and all the while directing us towards Jesus.

Vs 34

- In this last verse John just makes the simple statement that as he looks back on the things he saw Jesus do he can verify that he is indeed the son of God.
 - This is something that we all should be able to say; as we look back on our lives and see the contrast of who we were before Christ came into our lives and what He has made us since then, that in and of itself is a miracle. But the great thing is, that's not done yet, He will continue to mold and shape up till the day we meet face to face.
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