

(John - Part 17): Lessons on John the Baptists Humble Ministry

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the humility of John the Baptist and the importance of prioritizing Christ's ministry over personal ambition.

Duration: 51:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:30, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 3:7, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. He encourages the audience to let go of their desires for honor and praise and instead make Jesus their everything. The preacher reminds them that this life is temporary compared to eternity and urges them to surrender completely to Jesus. He concludes by urging the listeners to make a vow to change the direction of their lives and allow Jesus to increase in their lives.

Transcript

In the third chapter of the book of John, beginning with verse 23, verse 22, says, After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salem, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying him. And they came unto John, and they said unto him, Rabbi, ye that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.

But the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

There with the end of verse 30, John's testimony also ends. And from verse 31 on, it is John the Beloved, the writer of the gospel, commenting on the whole chapter. So we'll stop where John the Baptist stopped.

He must increase, but I must decrease. There is a good deal of history here, and I'll make it as brief and as interesting as possible, although there is a amount of plain facts which we are going to have to consider. Both Jesus and John were baptized at this time, though it is explained below, though Jesus himself baptized not but his disciples, and there is no disparity there between the words of those who came to John and said, Rabbi, he that is with thee beyond Jordan is baptized.

Because it explains, in a parathetical passage here, that Jesus, while he was conducting it, he did not himself baptize anybody. His disciples baptized, and he sort of overlooked the ritual. Now, these two were baptizing Jesus and John, and in their journeys they had come here nearer to each other.

John was bringing his colorful career to an end, and Jesus was just getting his brilliant career started. Each was fulfilling his divine commission. And as Robertson has said about this, that between these two men there was no rivalry except in the minds of the people.

But there was, nevertheless, jealousy which arose among the followers of each man, not between Christ and John, but between the disciples of Christ and the disciples of John. They were obviously jealous, because they came and said, Listen, we don't understand this, John. The one that you talked about as a bear witness to, over on the other side of the Jordan, he is eclipsing you.

His crowds are bigger than yours, he is baptizing more people, he is raising more excitement than you did, and he is just pushing you off the front page. You are being shoved back by this new prophet that has come. There was jealousy there, all right, but it was not jealousy for themselves, it was jealousy for their master.

Now, I want to point out here the wickedness of jealousy in sacred things. It's bad enough to be any time about anything, but when it enters the sanctuary it becomes wicked to a point of utter heinousness. The wickedness of jealousy is like fighting over a crown that belongs to the Lord himself.

I have two unanswerable questions about religious jealousy, two questions that I think nobody can ever properly answer. One of them is this, if the Lord is doing it, why should anybody else be jealous? If another man is having success and you're not, and the Lord is doing the work for the other man, then why should you be jealous? Because the other man is not doing it, it is the Lord that is doing it, you couldn't be jealous of what God does. That's one question.

The other one is, if God is not doing it, why should you be jealous of it? Because if God is not helping a man, and a man is only seeming to have success, he's going to wake up at the end of the journey, and he's going to find he has nothing but ashes for his trouble. Why should you be jealous of a pile of ashes? So that if God is doing it, why should you be jealous of a man who isn't doing it? And if God isn't doing it, why should you be jealous of a man who thinks he's doing it and isn't, and will wake up in the last day to find he has no reward and nothing but the disapproval of God? Now, like all logic, that won't help anybody, I might just as well have recited Mary Wants a Cracker, or Has a Little Lamb backwards, because nobody pays any attention to logic. They want to weep or laugh, but they don't want to think.

Maybe you do, if you're a blessed exception, all right. But for the logic of jealousy, the illogic of it, it bowled me over. I can't see why, if McAfee sings a solo, why I should run out and take a bow.

I didn't do it, when my vocal cords had vibrated, it is his. And if the solo is good, why should I take the credit for it? And if it's not good, why should I worry about it? I didn't do it. So it is with the things of God, if

a man is having any spiritual success anywhere, that if God is doing it, then God's doing it, and I shouldn't be jealous of God, but if God isn't doing it, then I ought to pity the poor man who thinks he's doing it, and God isn't helping him at all.

Well, that dispute, like often disputes do, it took another direction, and they went on to talk about baptism, and that is purification, the rite of purification by water baptism. And they had a dispute over it, and it appeared to be a sincere question, but it was inspired by other motives and hidden motives. The wise man is the one who can always get through to the motive for anything.

A fellow comes up all smiles and starts to talk to you. If you're foolish enough to take the smile at his face value, you may easily be led astray. But if you can penetrate the man's motive, it's easy to grin for ten dollars, you can smile for a good sale, and many a man, as Shakespeare says, smiles and smiles and is a villain still.

The man smiles at me, I want to know why. Is my hair on straight, or what is it? Is he smiling at me, or with me, or about me, or for me, or is he trying to sell me something? Motives is all that matter anyhow, motives. They matter, nothing else does.

So that if we could always know the motives back of religious disputes, we'd shrug our shoulders and walk away and close up tight and never answer at all, because the reason back of all this was rivalry and bad feeling. I don't know whether Jesus baptized more deeply down into the water, or whether John baptized more deeply than Jesus did. I don't know whether John baptized in a still stream, and Jesus in running water.

I don't know, but they got into a dispute about it, and it was the result of rivalry and bad feeling. I'd like to say this to you, that out of many years of experience, of what I hope is prayerful observation, I'm prepared to say that it's rarely that two God-hungry men ever disagree. If there is a disagreement and a doctrinal dispute, one of the men has ceased to be hungry for God, or both of them have ceased, or else neither of them ever was.

It's rare that two God-hungry men ever dispute over modes of baptism or of purification. It is when we're no longer hungry for God, that we get concerned about the niceties of doctrinal interpretation. And what passes for zeal for the Lord is very often zeal for my own opinion.

It is amazing how much zeal a man can work up, what a head of steam he can get on in favor of his own opinion. And sometimes that will clear down to very tiny, little things that don't matter at all. I sometimes say to people that disagree with me, well, you can be a good Christian and not agree with everything that I say, and you can go to heaven and not agree with everything that I say, provided we get together on the fundamentals.

And if we get together on the fundamentals, then the incidentals never ought to divide us. And I do not believe that two God-hungry men ever yet quarrel over incidentals, because if they're God-hungry, they'll get down on their knees, and when they're on their knees, they go immediately from the incidentals to the fundamentals. And when we agree on the fundamentals, we are one, and there isn't anything to dispute about.

But nevertheless, they were disputing. And these religious disputes over rites and baptisms very rarely have an honest origin. Almost always they're born in the dark of the moon and the sub-rosa, and they

come up out of a source that is not good, and so it was here.

And John, this was one of the nicest things John ever said. This man, John, was a son of thunder in the real sense of the word, this John the Baptist. And he could really peel a man's epidermis down close to his bones.

You know how he did it. If you were to look at the writings or the New Testament descriptions of John and of John's preaching, you will find that John was a terrible prophet with a sword of God in his hand. But he was getting toward the end of the journey now, and maybe he softened up a little bit.

And so when these anxious people came to him, jealous for him, he kindly changed the subject. And he did what his master often did. Our Lord often did this.

They came and asked him question number one, and he never paid any attention to question number one. He answered question number two, which they'd never asked. Jesus often did that, and John did it here.

They came to him and said, Master, how is it that that man, the two-pointed, two over beyond the Jordan, is now crowding you out, you, the great baptizer? You are being crowded out, and your popularity is waning, and his is rising. How can these things be? And John said to them, Kindly, your problem is not ritual problem, nor practice problem, nor mode of baptism problem. That isn't your problem at all.

But your problem is your far-off distance from God. That is your problem. Don't you realize that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from God? Why should you be excited in the flesh and worry about man's opinion and what man thinks of you? Why should you change your color or complexion or the feelings within your heart disturb you? Because I am being eclipsed by the man beyond Jordan.

He could receive nothing if God hadn't given it to him, and I can receive nothing if God doesn't give it to me. And if God gives it to him and gives it to me and gives more to him than he does to me, why, don't you see, that's nothing to worry about. It's nothing to get excited over.

We're all in the hands of God. That would be wonderful if we could all see it like that. It would be wonderful for church choirs if they could see it like that.

It would be wonderful for boards if they could see it, that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from God. And if he's got something that God didn't give him, he simply has wood, hay, and stubble that will perish in the last day. So why not throw ourselves over on God and say, well, I'm not going to worry about appearances.

I'm not going to worry in the slightest what men think of me. If anything I have is of God, and God's given it to me, then I have it. And if God has given something to somebody else, then that man has that, and he's responsible for it, and we're not going to worry about that.

A man can receive nothing, said John, except it be given him from God. So that if God has given Jesus, this man Jesus, a ministry, why should you be jealous of me? Because I told you long ago that I am not the Christ. I did my work, and now I'm about to fade out of the picture.

And I have introduced him who is to do a vaster work than I have ever done, the man Christ Jesus the Lord. Then he used a lovely little illustration here. He said the bridegroom is really the main one, the best man.

He's only up there as an ornament, and he sort of arranges things. In those old times, and I don't know how they do it now, all I ever do is stand up here and say, wilt thou? But in those olden times, the best man, the friend of the bridegroom, he calls it here, used to sort of take over and arrange the whole business. And he had no part in it except that he arranged it for the bridegroom.

And when he heard the bridegroom's voice, he was satisfied. The bridegroom said, well done, that was beautifully done, thank you, I appreciate this a lot. That was all he wanted.

He was happy because he had served as the best man to his friend. And John said, now let us apply that. He said, I came from God, sent of God to introduce the bridegroom and to prepare the country for him, prepare Israel for his coming.

Now he has come, you have heard his voice, now there's nothing left for me to do, I might as well turn out the lights and go home, because from now on the interest is on the bridegroom and the bride, not on me. I was only the best man. I simply got them together and arranged the walking up and down the aisle and the things they did.

I have no part, now I'm finished. Blessed old John, nothing that he ever said during his preaching was quite as nice as a thing he said when he was through preaching, when he brought it to an end, which is always a happy circumstance, brother. If we preachers only knew when to quit, I mean not when to quit in a given sermon, but just when to stop preaching.

Men have had a wonderful ministry, and then slowly they began to peter out and sound like a parrot and repeat and run around in circles. Their friends began to desert them a little at a time, and they began to get sour about it, and their preaching got filled with rancor and gravel. Oh, if they had only quit when they were on top! If they had only stopped and retired and said, You believe in retiring? I believe in retiring rather than getting sour.

If you can keep right on going and stay sweet to the end like John did, all right. John was sweet right on to the end. He said the nicest thing is just as he would bring his ministry to a close.

And then the last line that John ever uttered. I realize that a little while later, maybe a few months later, John got worried and sent a note to Jesus. But that wasn't in any sense a public utterance.

That was simply a note which he sent with certain disciples to the Lord Jesus asking if he was indeed the one John was discouraged and imprisoned and maybe even sick or at least badly discouraged. So we don't count that. This is the last public utterance of the man.

And according to Knox's translation here, here is what John said. He, Jesus, must become more and more, and I must become less and less. Now, this was John's last utterance, I say, and it gives us the secret of his ministry.

This is what made John tick. This was the beating heart of John's ministry, that Jesus Christ was to become more and more, and John himself was to become less and less. He must increase, but I must decrease.

So John condensed into this one sentence the secret of his spiritual greatness, and he unwittingly, I suppose unwittingly, put into one sentence the secret of the success of every prophet and every saint and every devotional man and every holy woman that ever lived in all this wide world. God must increase and I

must decrease. Jesus Christ must be getting more and I must be getting less and less.

And here is the strange and wonderful thing that as these saints said, God must become more and more and I less and less, God became more and more, but he also made them more and more. But the man who said, I willing that God should become more and more, but I also want to become more and more, immediately started to become less and less. Now, here is a strange voice sounding out here, this text.

Jesus Christ must be increased and I must be decreased. He must become more and more and I less and less. This is a strange voice, I say, and it's sounding over this modern religious vanity pair.

I received in the mail yesterday a nicely done brochure called The New Mood. Yes, I've heard of The New Look. This is The New Mood.

And the story was that we have a new mood now, a new religious mood has come to America and that we're all very much better off than we were. One pastor brushed off his metaphors and came out with the amazing statement that Dwight D. Eisenhower had resurfaced religion in America. The service had worn off and Dwight Eisenhower had resurfaced the poor old worn-out church.

And one after the other, absurdized about this new business in religion, more churches being built and more educational units being built. Well, why wouldn't there be? We have unparalleled prosperity. We have more money than we know what to do with it.

You see an old sack of something down the street here, it's money. Somebody has thrown it away or hasn't carried it around. We've got money in these days, brethren, lots of it.

And so naturally we have more money in our coffers and naturally every ambitious deacon wants to run up a finger to the sky to mark him when he's gone. And so we're building. But they can't take me in about Dwight Eisenhower retreading religion in this land of ours.

I don't believe it. I don't believe that a man that'll swear and get red in the face and drink whiskey ever be used of God Almighty to resurface anything. Although politically I think he's a wonderful man and I'm on his side.

But I'm not so foolish as to think that the Holy Ghost is using a cussing man who drinks whiskey to resurface spiritual Christianity in America. Now you say I'm over on the Democratic side, you'd be surprised, brother, you'd be surprised if you'd watch me pull that lever down for height back there in November that year. All right, but nevertheless I'm not going to be taken in by a lot of dreamy sentimental reverence.

When religion begins to take on meaning to men and when they begin to pay their bills and get out of debt and stay out of debt, when they begin to drive their automobiles like sane men instead of murderers, when they begin to serve God and attend prayer meetings and wait on God and live right, and the moral standards of the cities begin to rise and politics begins to get pure, not because somebody purchased it, it's because the public won't elect dirty men, I'll believe Christianity is having a recrudescence in America. But I'm not going to believe it just because we're building more buildings, and I'm not going to believe it just because they pray and have breakfast in Washington. A man can swear, use vile language, cheat and lie, and then go and bow his head at a prayer breakfast, and the poor preachers will all raise their lily-white hands to heaven and say it, then he'll come to judgment.

Oh, no, brother, oh, no, just a nice old boy that I thank God's in there, but he's a long way from being spiritual. We have bumped things a little bit in the direction of religion so that people can now, Jews, Catholics, and Mohammedans, and all the rest of us can get together better than we could before. Then what I started to say before I got over on that is, that this vanity fair in which we're living now, this is vanity fair, brethren.

This world in which we live, particularly our United States of America, this is a vanity fair here. We're given over to the lusts of the flesh, and to the pleasures of life, and to the sight of the eyes. We're given over to it completely.

To hear a voice sounding, listen real closely, and maybe you'll hear it in the midst of the babble of voices, he must increase and I must decrease. And we say, oh, wait a minute now, that's for our day? That voice sounds in our day? Yes, that's for us in our day. But it's hardly heard in this day when men shamelessly promote themselves and allow themselves to be promoted by language so extravagant and so preposterous that it amounts to downright lying where publicity is worshipped as a god, and where success is coveted and courted and wooed like a soiled curtain.

Men would rather succeed than to be fooled, and where the models for rising young Christians are not found in Jerusalem, but are found in the world where saintliness matters very little. We make Christians, get them in, label them, tag them, count them, register them, and in many instances they're seven times worse children of hell than they were before, because there's been no repentance, because there's been no appreciation or understanding of what Christianity means, because they do not come into the Church of Christ as new creatures, but they think of the Church of Christ as a kind of religious secret society or religious social club. Oh, this voice is sounding, and it sounds strange in this day, incredibly strange, that anybody should say, from now on Jesus Christ gets bigger and I get small.

Oh, we say, you're going to have to hire someone, surely you're going to have to hire someone to do publicity for you, you need a man, a publicity agent to put you over. John said, he must increase and I'll do the decreasing, and as the Lord Jesus gets larger and larger, I'll get smaller and smaller, and it won't matter because that's the way God ordained it. No man can receive anything except it be given him from God, and I have had my time, and now it's my time to quit and turn the light on the one who is rising with healing in his wings.

He gets bigger and I get smaller. Oh, that sounds like a voice out of the past, or it sounds like a voice out of the future, or out of eternity that has no past and no future, but it doesn't sound like the voices I'm hearing in the day in which we're living, uh-uh, because these are the days when everybody's promoting himself. Everybody's beating the drum for himself in religious circles, almost everybody, and we're going to have to stop and tune our ear trumpet up a little and see whether we can't tune in that strange voice.

I hear it. He must grow larger and I must grow smaller. You really mean that, sir? I mean that.

I'm satisfied to let Jesus Christ get larger and larger, grow in my ministry, grow in my heart, in my life, at my expense. He gets bigger and bigger and I get smaller and smaller, and in doing it we both do the will of God. That was John's last word.

I say nothing he ever said while he preached among men was as wonderfully illuminating and revealing as what he said as he was leaving his ministry, soon to be thrown into prison. Now, let us note here that it's only a rare soul that can hear this message, only a rare soul. But remember that your spiritual life, the

depth of it, the purity of it, the intensity of it, and the quality of everlastingness that it contains or doesn't contain, will depend altogether upon how sincerely you are able to say, I want my life to be so that I become increasingly less important, and Jesus Christ becomes increasingly more important.

Remember that you don't have to do it, but your spiritual life will take on quality from whether you do it or not. The fruit of your Christian life also depends upon whether you say, he must increase and I decrease, or whether you say, I insist upon increasing, I insist upon it. And the result of your labors.

We're going to all be called home one of these times, we great men according to whether they're young men, middle-aged men, or old men, or doddering old doters. But God doesn't look at it like that, because the wink of an eye and thousand years have passed away. Ten thousand times ten thousand millennia are nothing to God, and God knows that we're all old, that we're all in the long sweep of the years, won't be around very much longer.

And you're going to have to answer to God for your labor and the fruit of your labor. Some say, well, but I am not responsible for the fruit, I'm only responsible for being active or being faithful. It's a nice way to dodge out of it, my brother.

You'll be responsible to God for the fruit of your life. For the fruit of your life is a simple layman that couldn't stand on your feet and talk five minutes, but you're responsible for what God has given you. No man can receive anything except it be given him from God.

And if God has given you something as he undoubtedly has, you're responsible for that thing. And the fruit of your labor will depend upon where Christ is in your ministry and where you are in relation to Christ. And your conscious union with Christ.

Now, this is what I talk a good deal about, and I don't know how far I'm getting with it, but I talk about the union of the soul with the Savior, the conscious union of the heart with Jesus. Not the theological union only, but a conscious union, a union that is felt and experienced. And remember that Jesus Christ will brook no rivals.

He will not allow this holy union to be perfected where there is a rival, where there is someone else who is demanding the crown that he alone must wear, where there is someone else that is pushing himself or herself up into the seat where he alone can sit. That union of the soul with God comes when we follow John in the wonderful blessedness of bowing ourselves out completely and letting Jesus Christ be all in all in all. You see, friends, God made us for eternity, as I have often, often repeated.

And this little brief minute of time that we inhabit now isn't too important when it's seen against the vast reaches of time that we will indwell finally and inhabit. And if you can afford to push yourself up, can you afford it? I don't think you can. I think that you could for time, if time was just all we had, then I say that everybody ought to go out and get all he could get and in religious circles push himself up.

But when we use the holy sanctuary as a place, a theater, where we show off our talents, when we use the religion, the holiest activity of the human mind as material out of which we make a crown for our own empty heads, the whole thing is tragic beyond all description. Tragic, I say, to the point of absolute calamity. When we come to the altar of God, every man is the same size as every other man.

When we enter in behind the veil where the dim fire burns between the wings of the cherubim, every man is the same size as every other man. And there are no great men, no small men, no large men, but there

are only men. And when we can kneel there before him and take the holy vow that we are going to so live that Jesus Christ shall increase and grow always, we shall taper out and down and cease to mean anything and get smaller, then we are on our way toward not only immortality to come, we are on our way toward the immortality of our deeds.

It is one thing to say that God will at the coming of Christ give every Christian immortality, but it is another thing to know that immortality will also invest our deeds and our toil. You're working a little, you're giving of your money, you're trying to win a few souls, you're helping out here and there, that's toil, that's labor. You're standing against the enemy that's fighting like a soldier, and all that is good.

But beware lest it perish with the using, and watch that it get invested with the quality of immortality, so that when our Lord comes and gives immortality to our souls and incorruptibility to our bodies, that our deeds also and our labors that follow us shall also be invested with immortality. The immortality of deeds and labor and fruit never comes to the man who says I am getting bigger and bigger. It always comes to the soul that says he must increase and I must decrease.

He grows more and more and I less and less. They often talk about Dr. A. B. Simpson. He has been a great blessing to thousands of people.

It's quite an amazing thing that a revival of his books in the last few years has come, and so they're selling them like hot cakes. They're being sold and reprinted and reprinted, and yet you wouldn't allow his picture to be taken until he was an old man. He said, No, no.

I don't want to be pushed up. I don't want to be elevated above my brethren. He took the lowest, the humblest place and always kept it.

Someone came to a meeting, you'd heard about the great Dr. Simpson and his woman. I don't know what she expected, Bo Brummel, John Wilkes Booth, or Jimmy Walker. I don't know what she was looking for, but she said afterward, Oh, what a disappointment.

He said a man came in the back way and went to the back of the choir and sat down behind everybody else. Pretty soon they announced that Dr. Simpson would preach, and that was Dr. Simpson. Imagine that, taking the farthest place back.

He couldn't understand that, because being used to vanity fare and being used to men horning their way forward and rooting their way into the middle of the trough, she didn't recognize a man when she saw one who was dedicated to the proposition that he ought to get smaller and smaller while Christ got larger and larger. He gave to the Church probably the biggest vision of Christ given by any man in a hundred years of ministry. It is a hundred years of the various ministries of various men.

Now, if I were at this juncture to ask you or ask any average group of Christians, do you want to become, would you like God to come and do something for you that would make you great? Would you like to come to the altar and we'll pray for you that God will come and fill you in order that you may go out and do great exploits? There wouldn't be an altar room anywhere big enough to contain the people that would rush to the altar of prayer asking God to do great things for them. Oh, God, I want to be, I want to be as our Christ. But if you give an invitation and say, how many would like to come and dedicate yourself to the everlasting vow, O Jesus, from here on thou will increase and I will decrease.

And I am willing that thy increase should be at the expense of my decrease. And I am willing that in proportion as thou dost get larger, I should get smaller. And I am willing that as men love thee more, they'll love me less.

I am willing that as they admire thee more, they'll admire me less. I wonder how many people would come under those terms. Not very many.

They wouldn't stampede down the aisles and race into the places of prayer and kneel down and say, Lord, let me be nothing and be everything. But don't forget, my brethren, immortality lies there. I mean, immortality of deed, immortality of labor and fruit and reward lies there.

Not only that, but saintliness lies there. These grinning, glassy Saints, and I want to run as far as I can run. These born-again egotists, these twice-born extroverts who rush in and horn you out, O Lord, give me the wings of a dove that I may fly away and be at rest and never have to face that sort of thing.

Now, the man of God who says, I'm satisfied to be nothing if only God would be big. I've had a prayer written down for a long time where I've been praying it to the Lord, and I don't want to sound funny, and I especially don't sound funny when it comes to prayer. But I have asked God whether he would allow a scriptural application of a New Testament text to me.

Brother McAfee grins at me about it. But I've been asking God whether, I don't know what they say down in the Bible, exegetes, but I'm asking God whether he would allow this application to be made of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. You remember that story, Jesus rode in, and the little fellow of the long years got less and less, and Jesus got more and more.

As they rode in, they threw palm leaves down on the ground, and the little hoops of the donkey beat on the palm leaves, and they threw garments down, and his little feet beat on the soft garments, and he was having his moment in the sun. But nobody saw him. There wouldn't have been three people in all the thousands that lined the highways could have told whether he was a brown-spotted donkey or a white donkey with brown spots.

They wouldn't have known. They weren't paying any attention to him, but Jesus rode on top of him, and they were crying, Hosanna to him that cometh in the name of the Lord. Now, I don't think donkeys go to heaven as John Wesley thought chickens did.

I don't think that donkeys go to heaven. So I suppose the poor little old donkey got his reward by a good feed after the day was over. But if they do go to heaven, I'll recognize him there, because I am asking God whether he won't sort of let that be the way it is with me and with many of my brethren, simply that we be nothing, that we furnish the four legs and Jesus Christ rides in triumph into Jerusalem.

And when people look at us, they see two, but they don't see us only out of the corner of their eye, they see Jesus in the middle of their eye. And they say, Hosanna to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is saintliness and there is union with Jesus and there is spiritual elevation and there is great delight and there is that borderline ecstasy of soul that the Saints used to know, but it only can come as you give yourself up to diminish while he increases.

But if you insist upon being big, all that I've talked about will vanish away. You can't grow and you can't be fruitful and you can't be successful and immortality will not invest your deeds and it will be wood, hay and stubble in the day of his coming. So what are we going to do tonight? Where are we going to put Jesus in

our ministry, the lame and simple ministry or the grandiose ministry of the Bishop? It matters little, it's still the same ministry.

There are no bigger little men with God. And whatever your ministry is, if it's only to tithe your modest income and intercede and be faithful, that's a ministry. And the outcome of that ministry altogether depends upon where you put Jesus Christ in it.

Jesus Christ is big and getting bigger all the time. Well and good for you and blessed art thou, but if you're insisting upon pushing your way in, then God help you and have mercy on you, because I see nothing but loss and tragedy, loss of reward and the shrinking of the soul and the diminishing of the light as time goes on. John left us a wonderful text, that last verse he quoted in his final sermon was a wonderful verse.

What do you think about it? Would you bow your heads with me now in a moment of prayer? O Lord, your flesh is strong and vigorous and the world is magnetic and dynamic and the devil is active and unless we have thy help, we're not going to get very far. But O Lord, thou hast said, I will be with you, I will hold thy right hand, I will lead thee, I will turn away the arrow that flies toward thee, I will quiet the tongue that rises against thee, fire that is kindled shall not burn thee and the water shall not overflow thee, these things I will do unto thee and will not forsake thee. O Lord, we fear not, for we are in thy hands.

O Lord, we pray thee about the place of thy Son in our lives and the place of thy Son in our labors. We are concerned that he should be the Son, and if we shine at all, we should shine only as the moon, reflecting the light of the greater orb. O Lord, help us tonight.

Help us tonight. There are some young people who may later on in their lives become missionaries or ministers. And Lord, we pray that thou wilt teach them and then lead them through, at the cost of bloody feet and torn sinews and heartache, lead them through until they know that they have taken the vow that has been said of them, they have taken the veil, and the holy vow that can never be unsaid has been said.

From here on, it is I, nothing, Jesus, all. From here on, it is I, diminishing, Jesus, increasing. His light shining, mine dimming, more and more.

Grant, we pray thee, for Jesus' sake. Now, before we finish our prayers, friends, I feel it is so vitally important that I would like to have you seal this home to your own heart. I would like to have you take this as a voice of God to you, and tonight, quietly and determinedly, make some vows that will change the direction of your life and keep it on course for the rest of your life.

Jesus, Jesus, increase more and more, and cause me to decrease to be less and less. If you can pray that prayer, and if you want me to pray that God will burn this in on you until you take your vow seriously, so that he will be glorified at your expense, shine at the expenses of your glory, then I want you to stand and repose this prayer, praying for you specifically. But there are those who would say, remember me, Joseph, as near as I know, I understand you, and I want tonight that God should receive me as one who is determined that I am going to be small and he large.

I am deliberately taking the place of humility and self-effacement and loss that he might have the place of shining glory before men who else would stand. God bless you well. We will pray as we close our prayer.

Think it over, and whatever you do, do it most deliberately. Now, Lord, we pray for these probably 40 people who stand here tonight. Oh, God, the world is busy counting numbers, and the Church is even counting numbers, worshiping success, promoting flesh, pushing Adam to the front.

These are saying, I desire to put Adam under my feet and to promote Jesus Christ, and to glorify the Father who art in heaven, and to make Christ appear large and myself small. These are strange people, Lord, strange. For they have heard a strange voice from another world calling them to humility and meekness and lowliness, to take thy yoke upon them and follow thee, and to bear the cross that will slay them out to the place of death, that they might rise in newness of life and promote the high glory of the Most High God.

So we pray for these. We pray that all their hearts yearned for may be theirs, and that this may mark in each of their lives a specific stone of memory, a time when they will say, From that night on things changed in my life, and things have been different. The old desire for honor and praise and credit is all gone, and the only desire is to make Jesus all in all.

By the Holy Ghost come and possess these friends, until they shall be all, nothing in Christ, all in all, granted to be kept for Jesus' sake.

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