

The Bridegroom
John 3:22-36
Sermon Outline

Introduction: According to John the Baptist, “Jesus must increase and we must decrease”. This necessity operates at at least two levels: (1) The primary, historical level (the prophets need to give way to Jesus), and (2) the secondary, personal level (Jesus must eclipse every value, person, and dream in our lives). We will consider three reasons for why this should happen and, along the way, respond to some of the reasons why people think it should not happen.

I) Because Jesus is “from above”

A) vs. 31

- Jesus’ origin is different from that of every other human being.

**B) One of the reasons people give for not making Jesus greater than other religious figures:
It is implausible in a pluralistic world**

- Makes sense, given a certain way of thinking: Religion is essentially a psychological and sociological thing.
- But Jesus confronts us with an entirely different way of thinking: True religion is a “top down”, not a “bottom up”, thing.

C) The challenge to us: Jesus makes God inconvenient

- We are often happy with spirituality, as long as it does not tie us down.
- Jesus threatens vague spirituality

D) One application: We must be students of Jesus.

- The biblical Jesus must become greater in our minds
- Fabricating Jesus, Craig Evans; Judas and the Gospel of Jesus, N.T. Wright

II) Because Jesus is “the Christ”

A) vs. 28

B) What does it mean to say that Jesus is “the Christ”?

He has with supernatural power to fix everything.

“The anointed King”—the possessor and giver of the Spirit of God

Vv. 34-36

Spirit without measure: God is not stingy

C) One reason we fear making too much of Jesus is that we fear fanaticism

- People who take the real Jesus seriously discover that he chose to advance his cause by being killed, not by killing.
- His sword comes from his mouth not his hand.
- The real problem behind social oppression is not religion “per se”—it is people
- *Vs. 36: ...the wrath of God remains on him*

Jesus must increase because he alone brings hope to a dying world

III) Because Jesus is the bridegroom

A) vs. 29

Why was John so happy to become smaller?

Because he loved to hear Jesus' voice

(...my joy is now complete)

B) Why did John love to hear Jesus' voice, and why should we?

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord

She is his new creation, by water and the word.

From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

The best preacher you ever hear, the most caring pastor you have ever known, is but a friend to the Bridegroom, calling you to Him.

C) How make the Bridegroom more precious?

Trust: vs. 35

Conclusion

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Discuss or reflect upon the following statement: "If religion is a "bottom up" thing—the effort by people to cope with the world and each other, it makes no sense to elevate one religion over another. But Christianity is a "top down" religion, proclaiming that God is real, and has come down to us in the person of Jesus."
- 2) Do you know anyone who is into spirituality, as long as it does not get too specific regarding what to believe or do? What sort of challenge does Jesus present to your friend?
- 3) What challenges have you heard to the trustworthiness of the Bible's presentation of Jesus? How do you respond to those challenges?
- 4) To make Jesus greater is to permit the biblical account of him saturate your thinking. What steps did you take last week to permit this to happen? What steps will you take next week?
- 5) At least one popular writer has argued that religion is the source of all our social problems. If this is true, then anyone who takes Jesus as seriously as John the Baptist does ("He must increase and I must decrease") is a dangerous fanatic. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
- 6) Read Ezekiel 16:1-22. Itemize the ways in which it describes God's love for his people. Then itemize the ways in which it sets forth the people's response to God's love. Read Ephesians 5:25-30, noting how God, in Christ, has loved the church despite her attitude and behavior. Sing "The Church's One Foundation" and then spend time in prayer, thanking the heavenly Bridegroom for his love.