

8/1/2021  
John 3:22-30

**22 Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.**

**23 At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism. 24 (This was before John was thrown into prison.) 25 A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing. 26 So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us."**

**27 John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. 28 You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' 29 It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. 30 He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.**

### **The Wedding**

- What do you think the disciples of John the Baptist were feeling?
  - o Jealousy? Confusion? Lack of popularity? Worried?
    - Language of "that man who was with you" and "everyone is going to him"
    - They did not like to see their master take second place (and in effect, themselves) They did not like to see him abandoned while the crowds flocked out to hear and see this new teacher. (Barclay)

- In answer to their complaints, it would have been very easy for John to feel injured, neglected and unjustifiably forgotten.
- It is the dispute that provided an occasion for the Baptist to reveal his true greatness, a greatness rooted in genuine humility and an awareness of the limits of his own mission.
  - Attributes the success of Jesus to the favor of God
  - Reminds his disciples of his mission – preparing people for Jesus
- John used a very vivid picture which every Jew would recognize, for it was part of the heritage of Jewish thought. He called Jesus the bridegroom and himself the friend of the bridegroom.
  - One of the great pictures of the Old Testament is of Israel as the bride of God and God as the bridegroom of Israel. The union between God and Israel (because of God's covenant he made with them) was so close that it could be likened only to a marriage. When Israel went after strange gods it was as if Israel was guilty of infidelity to the marriage bond
    - **Deut.31:16** - And the Lord said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they

are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them.”

- **Isa.54:5** - For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

The New Testament took this picture over and spoke of the church as the bride of Christ

- **2Cor.11:2** - For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ.

- It was this picture that was in John's mind. Jesus had come from God; he was the Son of God, Israel was his rightful bride and he was Israel's groom. But one place John did claim for himself, that of the friend of the bridegroom.

- The friend of the bridegroom, the *shoshben*, had a unique place at a Jewish wedding.
  - He acted as the liaison between the bride and the bridegroom; he arranged the wedding;
  - he took out the invitations;
  - he presided at the wedding feast.

- He brought the bride and the bridegroom together.
- And he had one special duty. It was his duty to guard the bridal chamber and to let no false lover in. He would open the door only when in the dark he heard the bridegroom's voice and recognized it. When he heard the bridegroom's voice he let him in and went away rejoicing, for his task was completed and the lovers were together. He did not grudge the bridegroom the bride. He knew that his only task had been to bring bride and bridegroom together. And when that task was done he willingly and gladly faded out of the centre of the picture.

Have you ever been in a wedding party of a best friend or sibling? Were you trying to get in the spotlight or allowing the bride or groom to shine?

[Talk about Bre's wedding]

- John's task had been to bring Israel and Jesus together; to arrange the marriage between Christ the bridegroom and Israel the bride. With that task completed he was happy to fade into obscurity for his work was done.

- It was not with envy that he said that Jesus must increase and he must decrease; it was with joy.
- Could have been helping problems in the early church. Acts 19:1-7 tells us that there were people in Ephesus who were followers of John the Baptist but who did not believe in Jesus. Later evidence even suggests that such communities continued to exist a few generations later, which elevated John the Baptist and rejected Jesus' messiahship. If such division existed in the communities that first read the Fourth Gospel, then 3:22-36 becomes a potent corrective (NIV Application).
- On the flip side, there could have been elitism that could have developed in the ancient church between those baptized by Jesus and those baptized by anyone else.

John pointed the way to Jesus for many, many people and still points the way for us today here in John 3.

Who is your heart married to? In other words, who and/or what is your biggest priority in life? Who or what is the center of your love and affection? And I ask that equally of the married couples here as I do the single folks. If you do have a husband or wife, God has brought you and that other person into a bond so strong that the two individual people have become one. And

so we married people have to ask ourselves this question twice: once for ourselves individually and again as a couple. We have to allow our hearts to be searched by God and have revealed to us who or what is the center of our love and devotion? Is it Jesus? Is it some famous person or sports team? Is it ourselves? Is it our significant other? Is it our family? Is it our job? Is it our social or fun activities? Is it our hobbies? Is it ours wallet or bank accounts? Who or what are you married to? Who or what receives your love and devotion? Is it Jesus?

I know that each and every one of us has had someone like John to point to Jesus and say, "This guy. He's the one. He's my savior and he can be your savior too." And if you haven't had someone say that to you before, hear it today. Jesus – this guy – he's the one. He's my savior and he can be your savior too!

And so let's remember and celebrate what Jesus, the lover of our souls, did for us on the cross.

Bless elements

Instructions

## Invitation

And so as we come forward for communion I want to invite you to come and be reconnected with the bridegroom your heart. Jesus, the lover of your soul, the savior of your life, is waiting to be received. Come and feast with him.