

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to the Gospel of John 1

We have been inching our way through chapter one – as for the past three weeks, we have been studying the words that the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle John to remind us who Jesus Christ is.

That He is Eternal, He is God, He is our Creator, He is the Life Giver, He is Light and that He humbled Himself by taking on human flesh – while still being God, so that we can fellowship / tabernacle with Him, not only in eternity but also as we live our lives for Him today – as we walk in obedience to the special ministry that God has picked out for you and me.

In the scriptures, we find example after example of individuals who were called – and we also see their response to their calling.

Abraham

Moses

Esther

David

Jonah

Saul of Tarsus

And one of the things that we see in their response to their calling - is their flaws, their weaknesses yet, God still used them in a great capacity.

Listen to the words that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth -

[1Co 1:26-27 NKJV] 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

God has chosen the foolish things of the world, the foolish things of the world –

Wait a minute? What does that make you and me?

It makes us a privileged person to be used by Him; it makes us a privileged person to be chosen by Him.

And as we read the scriptures and watch other people's lives, it will appear at times that God will go out of His way to choose the most unexpected person, so that at the end of the day we stand back and say, "That is amazing what God can do in a man, in a woman that is yielded to Him, willing to obey and count the cost of serving Him.

In our study this morning, we are going to see such a man – as we study the calling of John the Baptist.

Let's pray...

So we are going to be looking at the calling of John the Baptist.

And before we get into our text, I want you to turn with me to Luke 1.

[Luk 1:5-17 NKJV] 5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife [was] of the daughters of Aaron, and her name [was] Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. 8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him (later on in the chapter, we are told that this was Gabriel), standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw [him], he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 "And you will

have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 "He will also go before Him **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

So God's calling upon John the Baptist is announced to his father – Zacharias, a priest in the temple.

If you continue reading through Luke's gospel, Zacharias doesn't accept this announcement by faith –

He asks for a sign.

And Gabriel pretty much says, "you want a sign, I will give you a sign – you are not going to be able to talk again until your son, John is born. How is that for a sign.

And church, that is exactly what happened.

As John grew up, being the son of a priest and because of his lineage – he could have followed in his father's footsteps serving in the temple -

But instead, we find him being obedient to his calling, we find him living his adult life in the wilderness area of Judah.

His diet was a simple one – locusts and wild honey

He wore clothes made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist – symbolizing the call for repentance that he was called to preach.

And I need to point out that John waited to begin his ministry – until the word of God came to him in the wilderness.

[Jhn 1:19-28 NKJV] 19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

As we continue our study through, we will frequently encounter a phrase that John uses – “the Jews”

John uses this phrase 70 times

John is not referring to all Jews, he is referring to a select group, the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem – known as the Sanhedrin.

And according to Matthew's gospel, people from all Jerusalem and Judea were flocking to John, so the religious rulers sent out guys to investigate and ask him who he was and what he was doing.

According to the religious rulers, anything religious had to be okayed by them first – so they thought.

20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

John lays out everything for the priest and Levites who came to question him.

"Guys, I am telling the people to repent and get ready for the Messiah"

And as people were repenting, he would then baptize them in the river to symbolize that they were being cleansed from their sin.

Now, baptism was not new to the Jews.

They had used baptism before to convert Gentiles

What the religious rulers were having a hard time figuring out was why John was baptizing Jews.

I asked you to make a note of where John states that he is not the Christ –

Remember, I stated when we began our study through the gospel of John that one of the reasons he wrote it was because there were false teachings within the early church.

And one of those false teachings within the early church was the John the Baptist was indeed the Messiah – the Christ.

John makes it very clear that he wasn't the Messiah – he was simply pointing to the Messiah.

And because he was announcing to the people the arrival of the Messiah – the guys begin to ask him if he is the Christ.

You see, the religious rulers were worried about this because there had been a few people that had claimed to be the messiah – remember, the people were expecting the messiah to come and liberate them from Roman rule – and in every instance, Rome had to had to put an end to the rebellion and in the process, take some authority away from the Jewish leaders.

So John denied that he is the Christ

Then they ask John if he is Elijah – after all, he is certainly dressed like Elijah, he acts like Elijah.

The prophet Malachi was given a prophecy that Elijah would come back one more time:

[Mal 4:5 NKJV] 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

In a way, John the Baptist partially fulfilled this, in that we are told that he came "in the spirit of Elijah" – we saw this back in Luke 1 at the start of the study

But John wasn't the complete fulfillment of Elijah

He is also asked if he is the Prophet - Moses had mentioned toward the end of his life (In Deut 18) that God would be raising up another person like him, called "a prophet".

This Prophet would complete the law & give more instruction about how to follow God.

Jesus was the prophet who fulfilled that prophecy

However, the Jews believed that the prophet was another fore runner to the Messiah like Elijah.

And once again, John said – nope.

22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said: "I [am] 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD," ' as the prophet Isaiah said."

The guys that had come to investigate John, they needed some kind of answer to take back with them to Jerusalem.

“John – what do you want us to tell the religious rulers about yourself?”

“What is your identity?”

Now, before we look at John’s answer.

I want you to think about all the different identities he could have given them.

He could have pointed out that he was the son of priest –

He could have pointed out that he was a miracle baby.

He could have pointed out that he was prophesied by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi

He could have said – “Hey, I’m special, an angel, Gabriel announced my birth” – how many people can say that?

But he didn’t,

I am a voice – by it, he shows humility – that is the first thing I want you to notice.

The next thing I want you to look at is.

He looks to the scriptures to find and give his identity – I am a voice

Church, what is your identity??? Who are you?

[2Co 5:17 NKJV] 17 Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

My identity is that I am a new creation in Christ

My identity is that I am born again

I am loved by God and I am a child of God.

That's all that matters.

Many in the world and even within the church – suffer from an identity crisis.

What's my purpose?

And they go from church to church or jump from ministry to ministry trying to find their identity.

Church, we will never lack an identity if we simply follow John's example.

We are just a voice.

A voice to talk to people about Jesus Christ.

A voice to talk to whoever comes my way on any given day about the Person, Nature and triumphant return of Jesus Christ.

The religious rulers wanted to know everything about John

Yet John's response – Who I am – doesn't matter. What does matter is the message.

What does matter is the Word, the logos, the One I am pointing too.

What's interesting about this is that later, when Jesus was asked about John, He said of all the prophets born up to that time, John was the greatest of all!

He was greater than Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel.

Some of the prophets performed powerful miracles & signs.

John isn't recorded as doing even one!

Yet Jesus says he was the greatest of all—all because he had the unique task of preparing the way for the Redeemer.

Yet when John is asked about himself; he deflects the attention off himself to the One he was sent to point to.

Church, we are nothing but a voice –

And our message isn't look at Me – look at how special I am.

The message is – look to Jesus.

24 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

The Pharisees were the sect within Judaism that held to a strict interpretation of the Law and also held to many oral traditions.

They are asking John, by what authority is he baptizing Jews, of all people.

You see, for Jews to be baptized – it was a way of saying that they were no better than Gentiles & needed to make a radical step of coming back to God.

The Jewish leaders, especially the Pharisees, took this as an offense because John was in effect saying they were doing a lousy job of leading the nation religiously.

26 John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 "It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

When asked about himself, about where he got his authority, John again points them back to the coming Messiah.

It didn't matter who he was or where he got his authority.

All that mattered was that they get ready for the One who was about to come. Who's authority was supreme –

I just love the humility of John the Baptist here in verse 27, and really it is one of the characteristics that he shows throughout his ministry.

He knows that it is not about him – he is just a voice.

He is simply pointing to the One who is going to have a bigger ministry / a bigger impact on the world.

I had you make a note of where John refers to Jesus as the One whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.

Later on in the Gospel of John, John provides us with the events behind Jesus washing the disciple's feet. We will study that when we get to chapter 13.

During this time, it was the responsibility of the lowest servant in the home to wash the feet of those that entered the house.

That is why Peter initially objected to Jesus washing his feet.

However, we have to keep in mind that before that lowly servant can even wash anyone's feet – the sandals have to be removed.

This is a servant position that didn't even exist.

In the Talmud – the Jewish writings, "Every office a servant will do for his master, a scholar should perform for his teacher, except loosening the straps of his sandal"

A student of a teacher might have been asked to do a lot of things, but never something so humbling as untying his master's sandals.

John is saying that his Master is so much higher than he is, that he isn't even worthy to do the lowest kind of jobs for his Master.

In other words, I am not even the lowest of the lowest servant when it comes to Jesus – I am just a voice.

Church, God uses humble people –

I remember someone speaking at a conference and it stuck with me – he said, to the degree of your humility will be to the degree that God will use you.

How is that so?

The bible says that God resists the proud and but gives grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3:34)

The bible says if you humble yourself before the mighty hand of God, He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

Paul gives this warning in Romans 12:3 (from the NLT) Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.[fn]

John knew who he was –

When asked – he could have said a lot of things –

But he said, I am a voice that is not as high as the lowest of servants to change the sandal strap of Jesus

He knew who he was

He knew how God had made him

He knew God's will for his life and he embraced it.

He knew that the message was more valuable than the messenger – that is the lesson that we learn from John.

Over the last three weeks, we have already learned how Jesus was the Word

So here we have Jesus the Word and John – the voice, and it will be the message of the Word that will be far more valuable than John – the voice.

Church, we have a message to proclaim – the gospel.

That Jesus Christ died for us – that He paid for our sins upon that cross and He rose again and one day, He will return.

Just like John, we are a voice –

And we need to stop making it about us – and actually start proclaiming that message.

And in doing so, we can follow John's example of faithful, humility and obedient trust in God as we live and proclaim His truth in whatever life circumstances God has given us.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT]

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

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