



JOHN 3:22-36

***To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”***

***(verses 27-30)***

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John the Baptist was a man who clearly knew his calling. His mission was to prepare the way, to clear the path, to smooth out the road, to provide easy access. All of it was in service to the one who was coming next. He knew his ministry wasn't about himself. It was all about the one he served.

Because he knew his own role so clearly, he wasn't threatened by the one who would follow. Indeed, right from the start he embraced the knowledge that the one coming next was greater. *“A man who comes after me has surpassed me*

*because he was before me*” (John 1:30). “I’m glad,” you can almost hear him shouting.

When we see it in the context of a wedding party, it becomes so clear. We don’t begrudge the limelight to the bridal couple. No, that’s what it’s about! We’re excited that the bride gets the groom and the groom gets the bride. Again, that’s why we’re there! John says he’s heard the bridegroom’s voice and he himself is retreating into the background. But there’s no regret; indeed, his joy is great!

And then comes the line that we are called to fully embrace: *“He must become greater; I must become less.”*

It sounds like a life-calling, an axiom to live by. What does that look like for me? Here are some beginning thoughts:

- **I need to get out of the way.** It’s so easy to see everything from my own perspective – it’s my own eyes I look out through! But John got it right. Maximizing my own gifts and calling and opportunities and joys and achievements and dignity is not the primary focus. *“He must become greater.”* I choose, then, to accept from his hand the assignments he brings, without first measuring the honour that rolls back to me. The honour is his.
- **I need to rejoice when the Lord is using others for his purposes.** If it’s about him, rather than me, it makes no difference which of his servants is used by him at any given moment to further his kingdom. When it’s me, I feel great joy. Equally, when I hear the echo of the bridegroom’s voice through the lives of others, I should be filled with joy unspeakable.
- **I need to see everything as serving his glory.** When asked why the blindman had been that way since birth, Jesus replied, *“So that the work of God might be displayed in his life”* (John 9:3). That’s true for the whole of my life, too – the hardships, the successes, the struggles, all is for his glory.
- **I need to see my life as part of his greater whole.** I am part of the glorious Body of Christ. His story is expansive, filling the cosmos. My own story, in its entirety, is embraced by him, woven into the grand narrative, providing the colour and accent he has planned. I submit to his creative hand.

*He must become greater; I must become less.* That joy is mine.

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*Lord, I confess that this is an ongoing stretch – to keep my sights less on me and more on you. Fill me with the joy of seeing your kingdom purposes expand, close at hand and far afield, within my own arm's reach and far beyond, when I have a hand in and when I don't. May your glory shine in and through it all – always. In this I rejoice.*

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Reflect:

Keep your sights on him becoming greater. Choose a phrase and pray it all day:

*(i) God exalted him to the highest place; (ii) And gave him the name that is above every name; (iii) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; (iv) In heaven and on earth and under the earth; (v) And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; (vi) To the glory of God the Father.*