

The Lasting Testimony of John the Baptist
Advent 3, December 17, 2017, John 3:22-30

We desire greatness, but who would trade places with the greatest person ever?
Marks of greatness of a baptized life measured by John's last testimony:

Being baptized into God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means...

...Jesus and his disciples went into the...countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing...a discussion arose...over purification... “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.”

- A controversy over baptism—nothing new! The purification debate centers on the differences between baptisms by the Jews, John, and Jesus.
- The 4th Gospel emphasizes baptismal doctrine, practice, and metaphor.
- *Faith (trust) in Jesus, baptism, repentance, community* – These are the hallmarks of salvation and a baptized life in Christ that follows.

...being baptized into a life lived for the glory of Jesus Christ.

John emphasized the sovereignty of God: *A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.*

- The crowds going from John to Jesus showed the greater glory of the Lord.
- John trusted in God's sovereignty: it made him humble, not lazy or jealous.
- Sovereignty is a beautiful but difficult doctrine of a baptized life in Christ.

John exuded a deep understanding of God's calling on his life: *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’*

- John had self-awareness, accepting God's “vocation” (calling) for his life.
- Knowing his calling gave John freedom to live fearlessly: called, not driven.
- A baptized life is a *vocational* life in marriage, parenting, church, work, friendship, ministry, community, etc. It starts with humility and listening.

John focused on the centrality of Christ: *The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.*

- It was not his wedding. John was there to serve the Groom. This is the purpose of a baptized life.
- If we fix on others, we will find reasons to be prideful or jealous. But to fix our lives on Jesus is to see ourselves as Christ's servants.
- We keep our eyes on Jesus by seeing Him in the Scriptures, on the cross, in the sacraments, in prayer and worship, and by looking on others with sacrificial love.

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John celebrated the joy of bearing witness to Jesus to the world: *Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*

- It was the function of the friend of the bridegroom to lead the bride to the man she was about to marry. This was the source of John's joy.
- Have we led others to Jesus? Is St. John a place you want to bring others?
- A baptized life in Christ is sustained by the joy of sharing your faith in God.

John gave all the glory to Christ: *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

- This is the singular statement and stamp of a baptized life in Christ. It's the "divine must" of every life saved and sanctified by the Triune God.
- John gave all the glory to Christ, for Christ alone saves us apart from any works of our own. This is John's last and lasting testimony to us.

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