

SERMON NOTES



MAR 12, 2023

I Am Not the Christ

John 3:22-36

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Overview: The ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist intersect briefly between the time Jesus goes public, and John goes to prison. During this time, some of John's disciples are concerned that his influence is waning while Jesus' influence is on the rise. John immediately puts to rest any notion of competition, noting that God is the one who gifts people and causes their ministries to grow. John explains further that Jesus' ministry takes precedence over his own since he is neither the Christ nor the bridegroom, but rather the forerunner to the Christ and the friend of the bridegroom. John then resolves to diminish in importance so people will focus on Jesus exclusively. John the Baptist's attitude is not simply the humble act of a desert preacher already fading from the scene. Instead, John the Evangelist explains why Jesus deserves preeminence in all things—He came from above and is therefore above all; He utters the words of God and gives the Spirit without measure; He is uniquely loved by the Father and all things have been given into His hands. The pattern is thus set for every Christian to embrace a supporting role in advancing the kingdom while pointing to Christ as the lead in all things.

01. Competition between Christians from a worldly standpoint is framed as follows: giftedness causes growth; do whatever it takes because the stakes are incredibly high; and my brand is necessary to accomplish the mission. Let us scrap this notion of competition altogether lest we build a following around ourselves as if we were the Christ.

02. Competition among Christians from a biblical standpoint is framed as follows: God is the gifter and the grower, but the two are not always tied together; the stakes are incredibly high, but the means of salvation remains the same; and my brand is not the sum or substance of the mission. Let us compete in exalting Christ together and celebrating God's work in the lives of others.

That You May Believe

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & DISCOVERY

1. Why were people baptized by John and the disciples of Jesus? What is the meaning and purpose behind baptism? (See Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; and Romans 6:3-5). What is right about wanting to see more baptisms in the life of a church? What is wrong with using the number of baptisms (or church members) to delineate the success or failure of a church?
2. Note the ominous tone of John 3:24 and compare it to Matthew 14:1-12. What led to the imprisonment of John the Baptist? What was the result of his imprisonment? How does John's imprisonment validate his ministry in terms of remaining faithful to the message he was given? How do Jesus' words in Matthew 11:7-11 underscore John's legacy as a faithful preacher?
3. How does John's faithfulness to the end of his ministry challenge the idea of celebrity preachers whose success is determined by numbers of followers? Pray that pastors and church leaders will finish their ministries well regardless of popular support or direct opposition.
4. Discuss John's comment in verse 27. How does this statement encourage us to support one another in our ministries at Northpoint and beyond? Do you rejoice in the growth of other ministries at NP and other churches, knowing that the Lord is the One who provides gifts and growth? See 1 Corinthians 3 for an excellent model of rejoicing in the gifts and growth of others as the Lord sees fit to extend His kingdom.
5. What elements of the preeminence of Jesus in John 3:31-36 stand out to you? Spend time thanking and praising the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for who God is and what He has done, according to John 3:31-36.

For Further Reading: John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ* (IVP, 2004)

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