

He Must Increase, But I Must Decrease

Good morning Westwood, Brittany and I are grateful to be here to worship with you this morning and to share with you what our God is doing on the other side of the world.

Intro with a story...

One of the great things we enjoy about the community and the ministry is how saturated they are with reading and studying the word together. One of the books we did a manuscript study on was the gospel of John. A manuscript study is.... I would encourage all of you to take the time and do a manuscript study together of the gospel of Mark or the gospel of John. It is

[John 3:30](#) ESV “He must increase, but I must decrease”

I thought it might be helpful for us to understand this verse a little better to read it from the NASB “He must increase, but I must decrease” let’s try the Amplified version “He must increase, but I must decrease” it can’t get anymore straightforward than that, but really what does this mean? As we work this out today my hope is that you will be so caught up in glories of Christ that your heart can take no other posture but “I must decrease for the increase of Christ”

These simple words should be placed as some of the most famous words in all of time.

And I believe we can sum up John the Baptist’s whole life with these words, it’s the very reason for the existence of John’s life...

To prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

[\(Isaiah 40:3\)](#)

But at this particular moment, as seen in the verses leading up to this, a discussion arose between John’s followers and a Jew about purification, and his faithful followers began wondering why John’s ministry was now becoming non-existent as the man he bore witness to has come along and seemingly taken it.

John the Baptist and his followers were standing right across the Jordan river from Jesus watching this take place right before their eyes.

“**look...** he is baptizing and all are going to him” they say in v. 26

Oh sweet John, standing there looking across at Jesus sooo graciously reminds his disciples who it is that he was sent to prepare the way for by giving them this analogy seen in v.27-29 that they

would have recognized from the prophet [Isaiah 54](#). That the bridegroom has come back to redeem his bride and his friend rejoices at the bridegroom's voice. ([Isaiah 54:4-5](#))

John is seeing this prophecy of Isaiah being fulfilled and his life's work coming to a completion right before his eyes. And his very voice that cried out in the wilderness will become silent.

But was this a somber, melancholy moment for John? oh No no no, it was a moment of exceedingly great joy that is now complete. All of history, was waiting for this moment. Joy that Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, the bridegroom had come to redeem His bride! John leapt with joy in the womb of his mother for the coming of Christ and even now John leaps with joy at the end of his life's ministry

John's followers didn't respond the same way John the Baptist. They wanted John's ministry to continue on, they wanted their own lives to continue on. They weren't ready to give it over and highlight Jesus. And sadly many of us Christians today do the same.

That brings us to point number 1... I am going to make this really easy for you guys....

Point # 1. We must decrease

Or as one theologian said more bluntly

“If you are full of yourself there is no room for His fullness”

Friends, our biggest enemy is self and if that's not being made evident to you right now in this current time of distrust, disunity, and disfunction in the world and in the church then we need take some time for deeper heart work.

Do not be fooled my friends this happens oh so subtly...From the frontline missionary TO living as a christian in the office from 8-5, from the single to the married, that's right singles you aren't getting out of this one and married couples (I don't even know how unbelievers even do marriage).

The point is, this is a temptation we all face. Do you see this in your own life? Take moment examine yourself...

1. Are you quick to skepticism, critique, and thinking you know more than others, especially those not of a different age, ethnicity, or class?
2. Is your heart more captivated by...something more than Christ
3. Are you more interested in the next netflix series, news outlets, or social media presence?
4. Do you promote your own culture, party, or nation more than you do your citizenship in Heaven?

What is it that must decrease in your life, what is stealing away from the increase of Jesus?

Let us confess, repent, and throw ourselves into the welcoming arms of our gentle most gracious savior.

Point # 2 Jesus must increase...

Now why is it that John said Jesus **must** increase? Was not John the Baptist a great man and prophet? He was. Even Jesus said so.

But John knew he himself was just a mere sinful man who was preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins, **not** that he could provide, but from the One who was greater than he, One whose sandals he was not worthy to untie.

And as he saw Jesus for the first time he said
“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”.

Oh what wonder...the Christ the Son of God, who left his heavenly throne and emptied himself by taking the form of a servant by taking on flesh in order to be the spotless lamb sacrificed for our sin.

It was the **Christ** who **must** be lifted up and **must** die for his people to be saved. That’s the necessity of the cross. Whoever would look upon the Christ repent of their sinfulness and believe in Him will be saved. And now He is our advocate before the Father our great high priest on the basis of his own wounds.

You see... Jesus **must** increase. What a beautiful and worthy Christ! You see it is not only about the work of Christ but it is the very heart of Christ that cause us to exalt him.

Have you considered the loveliness of the heart of Christ?

Dane Ortlund in his book *Gentle and lowly* writes “Let Jesus draw you in through the loveliness of his heart. This is a heart that upbraids the impenitent with all the harshness that is appropriate, yet embraces the penitent with more openness than we are able to feel. It is a heart that walks us into the bright meadow of the felt love of God. It is a heart that drew the despised and forsaken to his feet in self-abandoning hope. It is a heart of perfect balance and proportion, never overreacting, never excusing, never lashing out. It is a heart that throbs with desire for the destitute. It is a heart that floods the suffering with the deep solace of shared solidarity in that suffering. It is a heart that is gentle and lowly.”¹

And the amazing thing is as our hearts are more captivated by the beauty and glory of Christ, as He increases in our lives, interest in ourselves diminishes.

It is as Thomas Chalmers put it
“the expulsive power of a new affection”

As the red oak tree pushes out it’s dead old leaves with the ever growing rich sap of new life pushing forth new buds of growth. The more we grow in our affections for the person of Christ the less we will think about ourselves.

A Young man in Dubai...

“He must increase, but I must decrease”

Jesus **must** increase Westwood! John knew this. He knew that God’s sovereign purpose was the EVER INCREASING EXALTATION OF HIS SON! The world says well there’s no joy in that. They are dead wrong.

John had a choice at this moment...and he chose to completely empty himself and submit to the will of the Father, which brought great joy. The humility of John shows us where the greatest joy is found.

In this moment, today, tomorrow, everyday we have a choice to make.

Now it’s time for me to brag on my wife a little bit...

Lastly here are three ways to increase Jesus...

1. Give yourself over to habits of grace or spiritual disciplines
2. Humble yourself and serve one another.
3. Ponder Jesus through His heart. Allow yourself to be allured.

Like a glistening star on the horizon vanishes in the rising of the most glorious sun. The total exaltation of Christ in every molecule of our bodies is where great joy lies.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

¹Excerpt From: Dane C. Ortlund. “Gentle and Lowly.” Chapter 10, pg. 99