

Humility

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[0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Amen. Let's open up our Bibles to John chapter 3. We're going to be reading today from verses 22 through 30.

John 3, verses 22 through 30. And before I begin preaching the message, I would just like to say that I counted an honor and a privilege to be able to stand behind this pulpit to preach the Word of God.

And I'd like to thank Pastor Gardner for giving me this opportunity. John chapter 3, verses 22 through 30. The Word of God says, And these things came, after these things came, Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptized.

And John also was baptizing in Anon near to Salem, because there was much water there, and they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.

Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

[1 : 2 1] John answered and said, Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for this wonderful day you've given us. Thank you for the opportunity to be here at Vision Baptist Church. Thank you for the way that you have used this church. Thank you for the way that you've used Pastor Gardner to influence my life.

And so many of the missionaries and members of this church have been a great influence to me and my wife as well. I pray that you would use me today, Lord, as I open up your Word, that your Word would speak to our hearts, that it would be your Word that would convict us, that the message would be evident, Father.

For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Today I would like to talk about humility. And specifically, I would like to talk about the subject of humility in the work of God.

Now you may be thinking to yourself, Why is it important? Or why would we need to talk about humility? The reason is because humility is the key to a ministry that pleases God.

[2 : 3 6] Humility is the key to a ministry that pleases God. And I hope, this is my desire, that by the end of the message, you will see it clearly from the text of Scripture. And that you too will have that conviction that humility is the key to a ministry that pleases God.

But what do we mean when we talk about humility? I was trying to find a definition. And I came across a definition that I love. Actually, it's from a Spanish dictionary. The main dictionary that we use over there in Spain, from the Royal Academy of Spain.

And this is the definition that I found. And I really like it, especially when you view it through the lens of Scripture. Look what this definition says. Humility. Virtue that consists in the acknowledgement of our limitations and weaknesses, and to live in accordance with that knowledge.

Virtue that consists in the acknowledgement of our limitations and weaknesses, and to live in accordance with that knowledge. In other words, humility is understanding who you truly are.

Arrogance is like the opposite of that, when you try to be something or someone that you're not. But humility is when you have a clear understanding of who you are, and you live your life in accordance to that knowledge.

[3 : 46] Now, we all know that there is a humility that is false. I think that all of us have experienced this kind of false humility. It produces the opposite effect of genuine humility.

A humble person is a person that doesn't need to be the center of attention. A humble person is a person that doesn't need to be the center of attention. False humility is doing things that ultimately will focus the attention on you.

And I think we can all think of a few examples of that. For instance, there's the person that feels they need to remind you constantly of their acts of humility. Have you ever met somebody like that? Right? As a general rule, if you have to remind people that you're humble, then you're probably not humble.

Right? If you constantly have to be telling people all the things that you do, then probably the reason you're doing them is because you want to attract attention to yourself. Another thing that I think is very common, and many times I've been guilty of this, and I know we're all guilty of this, is when we overemphasize our weaknesses.

Right? When somebody asks us to do something, maybe somebody asks us to do something in church, and we say, well, we just can't do it. We're not experienced enough. When we really know that we can do it, and the only reason we're saying that is so that when we get up and we blow everybody's, what's the expression, socks off or something like that?

[4 : 59] There you go. Everybody says, wow. You know? Why did we do it in the first place? Why did we overemphasize our weaknesses? The reason we did that is so that when we blew their socks off, everybody would say, wow.

And look what a humble person he is. We all know that there's such thing as false humility. So what does humility look like for a believer? What does humility look like for a believer? Humility for a believer is to recognize who we are in relation to God.

Humility for a believer is to recognize who we are in relation to God and to confess our complete dependence on him. I think that as Christians, we should really understand what humility is.

I believe we really should understand what humility is. Why is that? Because the reason that we are saved or the way that we are saved is when the word of God, which is like a mirror, it shows us our true condition.

It exposes our sin. The Bible says that the word of God is like a two-edged sword, right? It penetrates and it shows us our weaknesses. It shows us who we truly are.

[6 : 03] And when we see ourselves through the mirror of the word of God and we become convicted of our sin, we repent. In other words, we agree with God about our sinful condition. We agree with God that we are guilty of our sin and we come to Christ by faith.

We know that we're not saved by anything that we do. We know that we're not saved by works. We are saved by grace through faith. So as Christians, we begin our walk in humility and we ought to continue our walk in humility.

I really believe that humility is a great test to see if someone has understood the gospel. I'll explain what I mean by that. For instance, just come up to any person that professes faith in Christ, any person that claims to be religious and just ask them a simple question.

Ask them this, how do you know that you will go to heaven when you die? How do you know that you will go to heaven when you die? And if you've asked somebody that question, you can hear all kinds of answers. You can hear all kinds of answers when you ask that question.

And one of the most common answers that you'll hear is this. Well, I do this. I am this, right? Look how much money I gave or look at the people that I've helped out.

[7 : 09] I'm a good person. You see, that's a good way to understand or to see that a person hasn't understood the gospel because when the gospel has penetrated your life, when you have truly understood the gospel, it humbles you.

That's what I love about the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul, time and time again, every time he has the opportunity to share his testimony, he gives a testimony like what we find in 1 Timothy 2.15.

1 Timothy 2.15. Look what it says. And there's a lot of examples like this with the Apostle Paul. He says, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.

And with him, I don't sense any kind of false humility. I really do feel that he believed that because of the way that he lived his life. Even though, as he says in Philippians chapter 3, if anybody has any reason to boast, it's me.

If anybody had any reason to boast in his religion and in his good works, it was the Apostle Paul. He said, this is a faithful thing. But he counted it all as loss for Christ. You see, we begin our Christian walk in humility.

[8 : 14] If you understand the gospel, you have to humble yourself before God in order to be saved. So what does humility in the work of God look like? That's specifically what we were trying to talk about tonight.

What does humility in the work of God, in the ministry, in what we are called to do, what does that look like? It means to acknowledge our limitations and weaknesses in the work that God has given us to do and to live in accordance to that knowledge.

That was the definition that we gave in the beginning, but we can apply it to this. It means to acknowledge our limitations and weaknesses in the work that God has given us to do and to live in accordance with that knowledge. So with that in mind, let's study our text for today.

I think it would be hard to find in the Bible a greater example of humility than John the Baptist. Now, I know what you're thinking. What about Jesus? Amen. Jesus Christ is our supreme example of humility.

But what we find in John the Baptist is an earthly example of genuine humility. What we learn from his life is that it's possible to serve God and be humble. Isn't that wonderful?

[9 : 15] It seems like that's something that is not very common nowadays in Christendom or in the evangelical world to be serving God and to be humble.

I think John the Baptist shows for us that it's possible to do that. So tonight, I would like to talk about three things that we find in this passage, three things that we find in this passage. The context, the conflict, and John's contentment.

The context, the conflict, and John's contentment. First of all, let's talk about the context. In other words, when we talk about the context, this is what we're talking about. What is going on in this passage that teaches us about humility?

What is it that is going on in this passage that teaches us about humility? Well, let's find out. Let's see what these verses say. Let's begin by reading verses 22 and 24. It says here, What is interesting about these verses is that they show us that at some point, John the Baptist and Jesus ministered at the same time.

This is what I find so interesting about these verses. There was a particular time when John the Baptist was ending his ministry. He was still preaching. He was still baptizing people.

[10 : 39] And Jesus was beginning his ministry. Think about that for a moment. John the Baptist and Jesus at one point ministered at the same time. Can you imagine what that must have felt like for John the Baptist?

Can you imagine? I feel very intimidated preaching behind this pulpit. Because I know the men of God that have preached here. I know the man that preaches here every week. I'm very intimidated about that. But can you imagine, Brother Garner, can you imagine what it would be like to be a pastor at the same time as Jesus?

Can you imagine what that would feel like to have a ministry at the same time as Jesus? If anybody would have been tempted to feel a sense of jealousy or resentment, it would have been John the Baptist.

Don't you think? He ministered at the same time. And what we find in these verses is that at the same time that Jesus was baptizing in the region of Judea, John was baptizing in Samaria. By the way, that wasn't an accident.

John was in the north and Jesus was in the south. They were in completely opposite areas. Already here we see John's humility. You see, John the Baptist wasn't in competition with Jesus.

[11 : 45] He went out of his way so that nobody would think that he was trying to compete with Jesus. Jesus was in one area. He would go completely to the opposite direction and he would preach and he would baptize.

So that's the context. That's what's going on. Just imagine the situation that John the Baptist finds himself in at this time. But then we find the conflict. All of a sudden there's a conflict that arises.

Look what it says here in verse 25 to 26. We begin to see this conflict. Verse 25 says, Then there arose a question. That means a discussion, right?

There was a discussion going on. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. We'll explain a little bit about that. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness.

He's talking about Jesus. To whom thou bearest witness. Behold, the same baptizeth. And all men come to him. Now, why is this section important? Why is it so important to talk about the conflict?

[12 : 44] This is why it's important. Because many times, this is what happens, okay? And I'm sure you've experienced this as well. We're talking about the context of the ministry here, okay? We're talking about humility in the work of Christ.

In the work that God has called us to do. It's very easy to be humble when everybody likes what you're doing, right? It's very easy to be humble when everybody's patting you on the back.

You just finished teaching your Sunday school class and they come up to you and say, That was such a blessing, just like every week. You're just such an encouragement. You're just such a blessing. You're just the best thing in the world. You sing a special and everybody just compliments you on what a wonderful voice you have.

And everything you do, you're getting compliments for it. You're going to churches, missionaries, and they tell you you are the greatest missionary that has ever lived on the face of this earth. And you're getting all kinds of compliments, right?

It's very easy to be humble. This is what we do every time we hear that. We say, well, to God be the glory, right? Praise the Lord. That's the typical answer that we give. We're humble and it's not very difficult to be humble.

[13 : 43] But just wait till conflict arises. Just wait till somebody starts challenging you. And believe me, it happens. For those missionaries that still haven't arrived on the field yet, let me tell you, there's going to be conflict.

People are going to be staring at you while you're preaching. They're going to be challenging. Even while you're preaching, they're going to be challenging you. I've had people interrupt me while I'm preaching and challenge me.

And in those moments, you start thinking, who do they think they are, right? Who do they think they are? All of a sudden, you're not that humble. That's exactly what's going on here in these verses.

What we find is that there is a conflict that's going on. There's a discussion that's going on between John's disciples and certain Jews. We don't know exactly who they are, but certain Jews over purification rituals.

Now, the Jews had all kinds of purification rituals, right? They would wash their hands before they'd go into a building. They had certain baptisms. Their whole idea was, we need to be clean.

[14 : 40] We need to be pure. They had the right idea. We need to be clean before God. But if they'd only read John chapter 3, Jesus said, you must be born again. You must be born of water and of the Spirit. You see, only God can cleanse us.

Only God can purify us. Only God can save us. If they'd only read, right? If they'd only understood what the prophet Ezekiel had said, they would have understood that. But at some point in this conversation, and it really doesn't say it here, but I'll give you a few hints that kind of show us that this is what was going down.

At some point, it seems that this conversation about purification turned into a discussion, a comparison, between the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus.

So here you have the disciples of John the Baptist, and there's certain Jews that are beginning to compare the baptism of John the Baptist and the ministry of John the Baptist with Jesus. And how do we know that?

Look what it says here in verse 26. Immediately, we find that they leave this discussion that's going on, and it says, And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

[15 : 49] They start saying, Wait a minute. People are starting to say that Jesus is better than you are, and his baptism is better than your baptism. People are starting to like Jesus more than you.

What do you say about that? What do you think about that? Are you going to let them say that? Now, of course, there was a little bit of an exaggeration there, because at that point, John the Baptist still had a lot of people that were going out to hear him preach.

They were exaggerating a little bit when they said, And all men come to him. That's what tends to happen when you get your feelings hurt. You start exaggerating a little bit, right? You don't take criticism very well.

And so they begin to get jealous. They begin to resent what is going on. They begin to say, Look, Jesus has more followers, right? In our time, he would have been getting more hits on Facebook.

Who knows, right? But this bothered them. So what we find first is the context. We find the conflict. And the importance of the conflict is that whenever there is conflict, that is when we have the opportunity to show true and genuine humility.

[16 : 53] It's easy to be humble before, but when conflict comes and people start challenging us, we begin to realize if we've truly understood humility or not. We've talked about the context.

We've talked about the conflict. So what was John's response? How did John answer? We're going to see John's contentment. John's contentment. We're going to learn three very, very short lessons that we can learn from John the Baptist about humility.

John's contentment. So what was John's response? Look what it says here in verse 27. A man can receive nothing except to be given him from heaven.

A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. In other words, the ministry that I have, this is what he was saying, the ministry that I have comes from God.

I shouldn't desire what's not mine. The first lesson that we find from John the Baptist in humility is this. John was satisfied with the ministry that God had given him.

[17 : 54] John was satisfied with the ministry that God had given him. The best way to be humble in the ministry, the best way to not get offended when there's competition going on.

And we know that this kind of stuff happens all the time in ministry, unfortunately. As missionaries, we start comparing ourselves between each other. As pastors, we begin to compare ourselves with each other.

Sunday school teachers begin to compare themselves with each other. But if you are satisfied with what God has given you, you will be content. You will be content. Now, I want you to understand something.

Do not confuse contentment with laziness. Do not confuse contentment with laziness. See, this is what happens many times. Many people say, well, I'm content where I am.

I don't need to grow. I don't need to learn. I don't need to continue maturing in my Christian walk. That's not what it talks about. That's not the meaning of contentment. That's not the meaning of being satisfied with what God has given us.

[18 : 56] That means that in every season that I go through in my Christian walk, no matter where I am, I'm going to be content with what God has given me. That means that our job right now is to clean the bathrooms.

We're going to be satisfied with what God has given us. We shouldn't be desiring what God hasn't given us at this point. We're going to work as hard as we can. And God has given us certain gifts and abilities that we can use for the kingdom of God.

And maybe it is not our place to do certain things. And there are certain things that we want. But we need to remember to be content and be satisfied with the ministry that God has given us. The second lesson that we learn and we see here from John the Baptist is this.

John was fully aware of who he was before God. John was fully aware of who he was before God. Look what it says here in verse 28. It says, Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ but that I am sent before him.

Look at that. He's reminding them if you've read chapter 1 of John there was a delegation that came from the Sanhedrin and they wanted to ask him some questions. And he told them he gave testimony of Christ and the first thing he said is I am not the Christ.

[20 : 04] I am not the Christ. He had a full awareness of who he was. Now, the first thing he knew is who he wasn't. He wasn't Christ. He wasn't Christ.

Now, if anyone had reason to be arrogant it was John the Baptist. Think about this for a moment. An angel announced his birth. He was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born.

In the womb he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of him of those that have been born of a woman there hasn't lived a greater man than John the Baptist. Now, can you imagine that kind of endorsement, right?

If you're a missionary and your recommendation letter was written by Jesus and it says there has never been a man born of woman like him if anybody had reason to be arrogant it was John the Baptist.

But he wasn't. And there's a reason for that. Because he knew that he wasn't Christ. He knew who he was. One of the secrets of humility is to recognize who we aren't.

[21 : 04] Right? In the negative. We should never take the place of Christ in the ministry that God has called us to do. We should never take the place of Christ in the ministry that God has called us to do. Then we see in verse 29 he speaks in the affirmative and the positive and says who he is.

He gives a parable in verse 29 to describe who he is. He calls himself the friend of the bridegroom. Look what it says in verse 29. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He calls himself the friend of the bridegroom. Now in this time even in this time as well you could say you know there's the best man the best man is the one who kind of helps the groom and everything make sure that everything is smooth make sure that there's no problems on the wedding day.

Right? That's what the best man does. This is kind of what it's talking about here the friend of the bridegroom. And you see the friend of the bridegroom doesn't get any attention really. He isn't the center of attention. You think about the wedding how many weddings have you been to and you see all the people coming in before the bride and the groom who cares about them?

Right? Nobody even thinks about them. Right? Most of the time nobody remembers them everybody wants to see the bride come in they want to see the vows and they're thinking about that. John was fully content being the friend of the bridegroom.

[22 : 26] And the reason why is because he knew the place that God had for him. He knew the place that God had for him. And the third thing that we see the third lesson that we learn from John is that he understood his role in God's redemptive plan.

I love this because you see he saw the big picture. He could see the big picture. This is probably one of the most famous verses that we find in John and we quote it so much it says he must increase but I must decrease.

he must increase but I must decrease. I love the word must because when he's talking about must he's talking about God's sovereign plan.

When he said he must increase I must decrease he had a perfect understanding of his place in the big picture of God's plan.

One thing that I've noticed in the three and a half years that the Lord has given me of ministry we've started having some trouble. Can you believe that? In a church we've had trouble. Some people have gotten mad.

[23 : 31] Has that ever happened to you Brother Garner? It's strange. I never thought it would happen but it happens. We had a guy in the church just recently this is really the first big problem we've had in the church in Padla who was very angry because he didn't feel he was getting the attention he should get and he didn't feel that we had given him certain positions that he should get.

Now right off the bat having that attitude it's probably not a good idea for him to have those positions in the first place but what did he lack?

He lacked an understanding of the big picture. He didn't realize that his role was a small part in the kingdom of God and the glory of God.

You see when we lose sight of the big picture and we start looking at ourselves and we start looking at God and the glory of God and the kingdom of God we begin to get competitive one with another.

We begin to lose sight of what it's all about. And the best way to get back to what we should or get back to where we should be is to get a view of God.

[24 : 40] Open up the word of God and see God in all his fullness like Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6. Right? on the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple.

Let me tell you something if you get a glimpse of God you will once again understand who you are and everything that you are you are by the grace of God.

Everything that you are. Verse 30 is the perfect way to end this message to apply it to our lives. He must increase but I must decrease. What we have learned in these verses is that humility in the work of God is possible when we acknowledge our limitations.

Remember what he said I am not the Christ and we allow Christ to be the focus of attention in all that we do. Anything that distracts from others seeing Christ in us is evidence that there is a lack of humility in our lives.

Anything that distracts from others seeing Christ in us is evidence that there is a lack of humility in our lives. And this is a question that I would like to leave you with to end. I would like you to ponder on this question.

[25 : 44] Have you become more important than Christ? Have you become more important than Christ? This isn't anything. This isn't everything. Think about it for a moment.

Have you become more important than Christ? He must increase and I must decrease. Amen. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.