

SERMON-BASED STUDY: LESS ME, FATHER

John 3:22-36, ESV – ²² After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. ²³ John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized ²⁴ (for John had not yet been put in prison).

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷ John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ 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. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

³¹ He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. ³³ Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Notes:

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QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

ENGAGE WITH THE MESSAGE

1 This week we were reminded that we have what we have because God gave it to us. God gives as He sees fit. Why can this be a difficult truth to understand and live out in our lives on a daily basis?

2 What is humility? Why is humility an important attribute for a believer?

3 We also learned that we play a double role in relation to Jesus – the bride and the friend of the bridegroom. Describe the difference between these two roles. Why is it important to fulfill both of these roles?

DIGGING DEEPER

A *Isaiah 54:5-8, ESV – ⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. ⁶ For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. ⁷ For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸ In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer.*

Revelation 19:6-8, ESV – ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

4 Looking at the passages above, how is the reconciliation of God with His people like a marriage union?

5 According to Revelation 19:6-8, the bride (the Church) is to “clothe herself with fine linen.” John further explains that this fine linen is “righteous deeds.” What are righteous deeds? How do you think the Church is doing with righteous deeds? How are you doing with righteous deeds?

6 Isaiah describes God as our compassionate redeemer. Why do we need a compassionate redeemer? How does this understanding motivate us to righteous deeds?

B **2 Corinthians 11:2-3, ESV** – ²For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

7 Paul sees himself as the agent of God (friend of the bridegroom) through whom his converts were “betrothed” to Christ. Why does Paul feel under obligation to ensure that they are presented as a “pure virgin” to the “one husband”?

8 The Corinthians have been led astray by their thoughts. How do our thoughts lead us astray? What can we do to keep our thoughts from wondering?

9 Like Paul, we are friends of the bridegroom. How does discipleship help us to prepare others to be “betrothed” to Christ?

TAKING IT HOME

Read Philippians 1:15-18. Today’s message concluded with a call to humility, to cheer on others as they do righteous deeds, and to check our motives as we do these things. Ultimately, we want to follow John the Baptist’s example of pointing others to Jesus and not to ourselves. How are you doing at pointing others to Jesus? Share with your group or accountability partner what God has been showing you. Pray for one another as you seek to be an excellent “friend of the bridegroom.”

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUEST

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

Numbers 11:26-30, 12:3
Matthew 11:11, 25:1-13
1 Corinthians 4:7, 12:26
Ephesians 5:32
Philippians 1:15-18