

Spiritual Resizing
Harmony M.B.C., May 6, 2018
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John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

John 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

John 3:24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

John 3:25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

John 3:26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John 3:28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

John 3:29 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.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

Today, we live in a world where fame, notoriety, that thing of being well known, has become an actual status symbol for many Americans. This is really nothing new for mankind, but the attraction for being famous and the opportunities to get famous have never been greater in human culture.

Worldwide communications through the internet and other sources has enabled people to get to know other folks on the other side of the world. Social media has connected people who might have never known one another and has allowed those people who make those connections to spread global awareness of their presence, their personality, their likes, their dislikes, their opinions, what they eat, what they drink, where they go, who their family members are, how many kids they have, what those kids look like, what pets they have, what their dog or cat looks like, when they feed their dog or cat, when they feed their kids, when they go somewhere, when they stay home, when they are sad, when they are mad, when they are happy, or depressed, or thoughtful, or asking questions, or wondering about something, or wondering about nothing.

If you want to know every detail about someone, you can find it out on social media. Social media users build for themselves what I call “glass houses,” and in so doing, they can build for themselves an identity that reaches out to the world. Many people today depend on this familiarity to feel that they are famous...it makes them feel like they are somebody. They are able to feel that they are larger in life than they would be if they just followed a private live. And for many of those, it increases their self-esteem and their feeling of self-importance.

Much the same kind of thing happens when people capture the attention of the news media with their marches, their chanting, their public declarations before the camera and the lights. People in the U.S. who were essentially “nobodies” are now superstars because a news channel went out to the site where they were protesting or showing out and interviewed them and let them spout words of so-called wisdom, or let them blast out threats to those whom they view as their enemies or adversaries.

When we examine all this public exhibitionism that goes on around us, we are forced to the conclusion that almost all of it magnifies...even glorifies the pursuits, the opinions, the doings of human beings. These things seem to always be aimed at showcasing the great and wondrous lives and adventures of human kind in action.

I would like to state that the **human exhibitionism** that we see rampant, at least in American culture, is **diametrically opposed to** the direction of **spiritual things** taught by scripture. And, our text verse, the conclusion spoken by John the Baptist, summarizes it all in one short sentence; “He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”

With that said, I want us to pursue John the Baptist’s idea, and move in the direction it will lead us.

The statement by John the Baptist is **about spiritual resizing**. From John’s viewpoint, Christ must increase and he must decrease. John had lately been in the forefront...it appeared that the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth was centered around John. Thousands of Jews had come down to Jordan to be baptized by John. (**Mat. 11:11** “...Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist...”) The dissemination of the message of the kingdom centered around John the Baptist. He was the current light for this new age that God set in motion. But, John had the right understanding about how things were supposed to be...Christ must increase and the man must decrease.

Illustrate using the moon lighting the night, but diminishing to a white ball when the sun rises in the morning

This concept spoken by John the Baptist **does not point to a well-worn path**. The human spirit has a huge tendency to refuse and resist becoming anonymous. That is why seeking fame in social media and having movie stars and other celebrities as cultural idols is so popular. Yet, we find that scripture is full of advice about following the path identified by John. I believe that the advice that the Lord gave to Baruch in **Jeremiah 45:5** is advice that every child of God should take seriously: "...seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not...."

Folks, I won't be stretching the great truth articulated by John to say that for us to really glorify our Savior and for us to get to a place where we are living this concept, we must each seek how that, in our own lives, Christ must increase, but we must decrease. So, today, we want to focus on these four things related to how we can live up to the spirit of John's testimony...He must increase but I must decrease.

I. First, **Christ must increase in presence while we decrease in presence**

- ❖ Have you ever noticed when you watch some performance on a stage on TV, that when it comes time for the featured artist to present his or her thing, the spotlight tightens up until it is shining just on the artist.
- ❖ This is the way some folks handle the things in their life that are supposed to be spiritual things. They make sure the spotlight tightens up until only they are in that limelight.
- ❖ Now, folks, let me ask you a very important question: when we are serving the Lord, when we are doing things that are for Him, who is supposed to be in that spotlight
 - **Col. 2:9** For in him dwelleth **all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**.
 - **Col. 1:18** And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* **he might have the preeminence**.
 - **Col 3:3** For ye are dead, and your **life is hid** with Christ in God.
- ❖ Jesus Christ is supposed to be the one who is center stage. It is His presence that we are to attempt to feature...not our own presence.
 - Paul said in **Gal. 2:20** "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

- Simon the sorcerer we read about in **Acts 4** was a big showman, and imagined himself to be a real celebrity, but that is the very thing the Lord had against him...and so it is with any person who demands to have a big presence in the arena of spiritual things
- ❖ Which brings us to another important aspect about the presence of the Lord. **He must increase as a presence within us as the presence of our own carnal self decreases.**
 - You know, the term “metamorphosis” is a big subject area in the world of science...especially biological science. Biologists are always studying and being awed by the drastic changes of some animals, especially insects, from larval stage through nymph stage to adult. We see some pretty dramatic changes in God’s creatures as they move toward adulthood.
 - For instance, those grub worms you dig up around your flowers and in your garden change from that lowly white worm to some kind of colorful beetle.
 - Tadpoles turn into frogs
 - A hellgrammite (looks like an ugly centipede) turns into a dobsonfly
 - These natural changes in the animal world are great types of the change that believers should make as Christ increases His presence in us as our own fleshly nature is subdued by the Lord and decreases. So how does this happen? Paul does a wonderful job of explaining it in:
 - **Eph. 3:16** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be **strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;**
 - Eph. 3:17** That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;** that ye, being **rooted and grounded in love,**
 - Eph. 3:18** May be able to **comprehend** with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
 - Eph. 3:19** And to **know the love of Christ,** which passeth knowledge, **that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**

II. Second, **Christ’s purposes must increase in our lives while our personal purposes must decrease.**

- ❖ James had been looking around at his fellow Jews, and he had noticed how their plans were all about self-designed purposes, and so he warns them in **James 4:13-15** Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: **14** Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. **15** For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

- In this he nails the fact that those folks were making their plans based on their own selfish purposes. He also nails the truth about how they can remedy that and increase the presence of the Lord in their planning by simply adopting the awareness that all their planning can only take place if the Lord wills.
- Like the successful farmer in Luke 12, we may fill our lives with personal purpose without taking thought for what purposes the Lord may have for us.
- The apostle Paul was very conscious of how fleshly purpose could get in the way of fulfilling the purposes of the Lord. When he wrote the Corinthian church in the second letter, he asked a very important question about this. (**2Cor. 1:17**) **When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?**
 - He then went on to answer it by pointing out that in Christ it is all yea, and that he was submissive to the purposes of the Lord.
- ❖ As humans we tend too often to make our plans based on some human and fleshly purpose...it is convenient, or it is fun, or it is something we can do while we are pursuing our own agenda
 - Today in our country, there are a lot of people who admit that they are members of certain churches because it is good for their business.
 - Brassmagazine.com advertises 5 U.S. organizations that are good to join for fluffing up our resumes: FBLA, FFA, Youth Service America, 4-H, and Sustain Us
 - There are millions of Americans who belong to mega-churches today because those churches offer various kinds of entertainment and market their so-called religious activities under what has been called a “buffet religion.” That is, there’s lots of stuff to attract human interest and you can pick what part of it you want to add to your religious activities. Feeding the fleshly feelings is all part of the marketing strategy used by those so-called churches and that is why they are so popular. This is the use of human purpose as a replacement of Christ’s purposes.
- ❖ I wonder how often we think about how we may do things we purpose to do in our temporal lives **AS** we go about to do the Lord’s things?
- ❖ Do we ever ask ourselves what Christ meant when He told us in **Mat. 6:33** **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**
- ❖ It is about making Christ’s purposes increase in our lives while personal purposes decrease.
 - It is the purpose of Christ to spread the gospel through his people. Have we made that one of our purposes?

- It is the purpose of Christ to build up the members of his church. Have we made that one of our purposes?
- It is the purpose of Christ to grow the fruit of the Spirit among the people of God love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (**Gal. 5:22-23**). Have you made that one of your purposes?

III. Next, Christ's preferences must increase in our lives while our personal preferences must decrease

- ❖ All of us know the little grade-school ditty about Jack Spratt and his wife. Because Jack ate no fat, and his wife ate no lean, they both were able to have their own preferences about meat. But it is not that way in many cases when we consider preferences that humans have versus preferences our Savior has. With those, many times there are conflicts and contradictions.
- ❖ I love barbecue pizza. I can eat myself sick on it, but the truth is, if I ate barbecue pizza all the time and ignored other nutritious food, I would soon be in physical trouble. In the same way, if we are too busy feeding on our own preferences and ignoring the things that the Lord prefers for us to do, we will soon be in spiritual trouble.
 - Personal preferences followed will often lead us into worldly troubles
 - Ants prefer sweet stuff over a lot of other things. We used to have some real problems with ants where we lived and we found some ant bait made by Terro that was like Karo white syrup. We'd put it on little cardboard strips where they were getting in the house and those ants would travel from all over the yard to get that stuff, take it back to their hives and store it. Every ant would be eating it and pretty soon there were no ants coming into the house. They were all dead from eating the Terro bait!
- ❖ So how is it with each of us regarding personal preferences over against the preferences of the Lord?
 - **Col. 3:2** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
 - The Lord's preference for us is **that we live by faith**...but how much do we let faith in him guide not only our spiritual actions, but also guide our day to day activities
 - The Lord's preference for us is **that we not look back**, but look ahead and press toward the mark of the high calling of God, but how many times do we prefer to stare back into the past (which we cannot change) and lose sight of the mark at the end of the race?
 - The preference of the Lord for us is that we plow in hope and that those who get involved in the outcome of that plowing should share in that hope. But, how often do we get skeptical about our labor and begin to prefer to become

discouraged or depressed about what we imagine to be the end result of spiritual labor?

- **1Cor. 9:10** "...he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."

IV. Last, **our connection with and care for Christ's people must increase** but **our connection with and care for our fleshly associations with people must decrease** by comparison.

- ❖ It is a great attitude to care about our families, and we should.
- ❖ The bible teaches us that we should assume responsibility for the welfare of our families, and that includes both their temporal and spiritual welfare.
- ❖ And what I am talking about when I say that connection and care for Christ's people must increase and care and connection for our people associations in fleshly things must decrease, I am talking about a relative measure here.
- ❖ But, let's be clear. Paying attention about promoting Christ in our lives, and practicing a decrease in our own things includes our attitudes and energy expenditures related to our human relationships.
- ❖ Jesus was pretty blunt about this important element needed in our lives so that He would increase in importance to us:
 - **Mat. 10:37** **He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**
 - So, we need to get our priorities right about who in this world is most important to us.
 - **John 13:34** **A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**
 - **1Cor. 12:25** That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the **same care one for another.**
 - 1Cor. 12:26** And whether one member suffer, **all** the members **suffer with it;** or one member be honoured, **all** the members **rejoice with it.**
 - **Rom. 12:10** *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
 - **Eph 3:14-15** For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** Of whom the whole **family** in heaven and earth is named,
 - Jesus set the stage for us in his historical remark concerning his family:
 - **Mat 12:46** While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.
 - Mat 12:47** Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.
 - Mat 12:48** But he answered and said unto him that told him, **Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?**

Mat 12:49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said,
Behold my mother and my brethren!

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in
heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.