

**Message: The Best Man Ever**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**John 3:22-30**  
**The Best Ever Sermon Series**  
**December 20, 2020**

Our daily readings this week tell about Jesus' cousin, John the Baptizer. Both have dramatic birth narratives. John lived a godly and influential life. Jesus claimed nobody had ever been greater than John (Matthew 11:11). John stirred things up before the Messiah arrived. Several images of John describe his rugged appearance and his effective preaching. He had his own disciples, but he insisted he was the best man at the wedding. He prepared the way for the groom. John knew his identity. He played his role well. He was the epitome of Asbury's first staff core behavior "Confident Humility." While John had doubts when thrown into prison, and though he lost his life, he lived in obedience to the Lord. Our memory verse is, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (verse 30). It is simple to quote but hard to apply. Leonard Bernstein, a phenomenal orchestra conductor, was asked what he thought was the most difficult instrument to play. He answered, "*The second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm—that's a problem...*" John was not only the best man for Jesus; Jesus said John was THE best man. Yet, Jesus also said the one who is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John (Matthew 11:11).

APPLICATION: Pride is probably the biggest barrier we must overcome in life. Pride keeps us from admitting our sin and our need for a Savior. Pride insists on "me first." It can be hard to humble ourselves before the Lord and others. How difficult is it for you to trust the Lord? To put Him first? How difficult is it for you to celebrate others? Why do you think that is? Use this week to sincerely build up another.

**John 3:22-30**

*After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. <sup>23</sup> John also was baptizing at Aenon (EE-nahn means "double springs") near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized <sup>24</sup> (for John had not yet been put in prison). <sup>25</sup> Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. <sup>26</sup> 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." <sup>27</sup> John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease."*

After years in obscurity in the wilderness in loneliness and isolation, John became a religious rock star. People were flocking to see him. Now, there's a new kid in town. **John's disciples** grumbled about taking a backseat to Jesus. They seemed angry, ambitious, envious, and resentful. John's disciples were neither joyous nor humble. Who is this upstart? Who does he

think he is? You know, we were here first. And, John YOU baptized Him – He didn't baptize you. His disciples resisted change. They liked things the way they were. They didn't want their guy to become #2. They wanted him to be the great one. Furthermore, they wanted the best places for themselves. In fact, they were offended by Jesus.

**John** wasn't offended. He had the same situation but had a completely different perspective. Instead of being offended, angry, resentful, bitter, and proud – John knew who he was and didn't mind playing 2<sup>nd</sup> fiddle.

#### **4 THINGS JOHN KNEW:**

**GOD** *"A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.*

**HIMSELF** *'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'* He knew he was the Best Man, not the groom, he. He embraced his role and how he was to **serve**. There was no tinge of rivalry, jealousy, insecurity, or bitterness.

**JOY.** *<sup>29</sup> 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.*

**HUMILITY.** He didn't try to be humble, he tried to follow God. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* "The good is the enemy of the best." No matter how great we are, we will be eclipsed. Do your best in what God has called you to do, and celebrate God's gifts in others who are following Jesus. Cooperation, not competition.

**Jesus' disciples** were also easily offended. **Kids** offended them: Matthew 19:13-15 *Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* The **Samaritans** offended them when they didn't believe in Jesus and they wanted to retaliate. They asked Jesus if He would call fire down from heaven and consume them. They were also offended that Jesus would talk to the **Samaritan woman** at the **well**. Matthew 26:6-11 *Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.* The 10 disciples were indignant at James and John when the brothers requested to sit at Jesus' right hand.

Matt 15:12-15 *Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."* The Pharisees loved their rules. And they were easily offended by people who didn't keep them. That was most everyone else. That's why they hated Jesus – He didn't play their game. Jesus did not ignore what was wrong. He spoke against sin. But He did so w/o bitterness or contempt. He offered life to anyone who would accept it – including Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees. Jesus just let it go. He didn't hang on to it or dwell on it.

Anger, bitterness, contempt, resentment, etc. is a tiring business. It wears us out. The longer I'm a Christian, the more I am a Pharisee, too. I like keeping the rules. I like feeling better than others. But it's a sham. Because I know deep down, I'm not. My self-righteousness is not God's righteousness – it's a different form of unrighteousness. Check out Romans 2 if you don't believe me.

I'm not alone. UNOFFENDABLE (Brant Hansen) Why are Christians so easily offended? The truth of the matter is, we kind of like find being angry. It is delicious. We slurp it up. THEY are our problem. For 4 years some Christians hated the current president. Over the next 4 years some Christians will hate the new president. What happened to "*pray for your enemies?*" Some Christians hated the government or wearing or not wearing a mask. Or a boss/employee; teacher/student; family member or ex-family member; or someone who LIED or CHEATED us; or the idiot motorists who just did in front of me what I may well do in front of you. He's an idiot. I'm not. I'm awesome. Instead of praying for the man or our enemies...many Christians just hate. We say we hate the sin but love the sinner, but we often really hate both. Or we hate THEIR sin (and not our own). Being a Pharisee is really 2<sup>nd</sup> nature for many Christians. The New Testament tells us not to be angry. But we are. The truth of the matter is we have all lied, cheated and broken promises, too. Not just a few of us – but all of us. We have offended others. We have been passive...or passive aggressive. Anger doesn't accomplish much, other than to deepen our aggression. Action, not anger, is what the New Testament calls us to.

Read letter from someone who didn't like the story, "Eve's Problem." It was from Volume V. I wrote it in 2005. After getting the guy's letter, I have got a choice to make: should I be angry/offended or not? How do I respond?

We will have ample opportunity over the next week to be offended.

- 1.) Who will I allow to offend me?
- 2.) Who will I be angry with? Why?
- 3.) Will I operate from Pride or Humility?
- 4.) Will I speak the truth in love – or become bitter?

How do I do this? Paul, a recovering Pharisee, said: "*I can do all things thru Christ who strengthens me.*" Through Christ. God offends us, too. Our problem = our pride. Our solution = to trust in Christ. That Jesus died on the cross for our salvation is so offensive to many people that they will never believe in him. The cross is a stumbling block. If we admit we've got a problem, which is always the hardest thing, we can find our strength through Christ. Communion is our time now to receive His grace into our lives. By kneeling we confess our pride and inability to save ourselves. By kneeling, we receive His grace into our lives. Open your heart to him. In the Name of Jesus Christ – You Are Forgiven. We can forgive others. We don't have to let others offend us anymore.

