

Outcasts Part 1

John The Baptist

Luke 1:5-25

Memory Verses: John 3:30

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Have you ever had a friend that just didn't fit in your circle? Maybe you're circle was the jocks or the cheerleaders and you had that one artsy friend or drama club friend. Or maybe you ran with the chess club but you had that one friend who was into metal. My circle of friends were my youth group guys. There was me, Chuck, Timmy, Forest, Steven, and my younger brother Jesse. Everyone was kind of into the same teenager type things except Jesse. While we were all into dressing well with the popular tennis shoes or preppy clothes like Duck Head. Do you remember Duck Head? Jesse didn't give a rip. He would wear a 5 year old white t-shirt with stains on it and gym shorts everywhere he went, even to church. While the rest of us ended up being smokers, Jesse would never touch a cigarette. He wouldn't bend to the peer pressure. While the rest of us ended up going into the work force, military, or ministry, Jesse became a business man. He has always beat to his own drum, but that doesn't matter, he has always been one of us.

Jesus also had a circle of friends, but in this circle every single one of them was different; they didn't fit. From lowly fishermen, to adulteresses, from tax collectors to pharisees, Jesus was known for keeping company with the fringe of society. And this of course was for a reason. He wanted different. He wanted to take those which others thought were incapable of great things and use them to show the power of God. They were outcasts, and they would change the world. This morning we begin a new series on the cast of outcast characters that Jesus loved, ran with, disciplined, and used to begin his church.

The first outcast that we are going to focus on is John the Baptist. And man, was John an outcast. Look with us in Mark's introduction as he describes to us this outcast. **Mark 1:1-8.**

He wore camels hair and ate locusts, lived in the wilderness, and raged at the religious elite. Some refer to him as "crazy John." But John was not crazy. In fact he was one of the most influential people of all time. That is why the Gospels talk more about John the Baptist than they do about any other single person, except Jesus. And that is why we will take two weeks to look at John. Normally I try not to have two part sermons, which I'm sure most of you are like, that would be great, but this time I have no choice, there's just too much scripture to try to tackle John in one sermon. This week we will focus on his birth and ministry and next

week we will look at his imprisonment and death.

And as we look at John the Baptist today and next week I'm hoping that we can see some qualities about Him that we should emulate. What did Christ see in him and how did he use him for his glory? We should all want to be used for God's glory right? We should all want to be seen as a one who prepares the way for the Lord, right? And shouldn't we all want Jesus to say of us, as he does of John in **Matthew 11:11**, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist." This morning we are going to focus on two of John's greatest attributes, his righteous indignation and his humility. Today we must see that, like John, **we must be different from the world in the ways we unwaveringly stand for the truth and redirect the spotlight towards Christ.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see about John the Baptist is that... **The Birth of John Foreshadows The Promised Christ.** Let's just be honest, John the Baptist was very different because his conception and birth were very different. Look with me at **Luke 1:5-25, 57-66.** Zechariah & Elizabeth were levites which means that Zechariah was a priest. Elizabeth was barren and they were beyond child bearing years. And the angel Gabriel visits him and tells him they are going to have a child.

And then Gabriel goes down a list of things that will happen with this child. First, his name will be John. In Hebrew, Yohanan, meaning graced by God. He will be great before the Lord and be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. And in the spirit and power of Elijah, he will turn many back to God. In short, he will prepare the people for the Lord's coming.

Well, that's a lot to take in and Zechariah, because of his age and Elizabeth's medical issues, doesn't believe the angel. Gabe takes offense to this and curses him with not being able to speak until after the baby is born. When he is born they call him John and their family doesn't understand why because John is not a family name. At that point Zechariah's speech comes back and it says that everyone knew that John was special and the the hand of the Lord was with him. Wow right? Don't we wish we all had a birth story like that? I mean, a lot of people through the years ask me where I got my name from and I used to tell them that my dad had a Chevy van and that's where I was conceived, but that was a lie. John was built different!

And then look at what his father, Zechariah, declares through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in **Luke 1:67-80.** Notice he speaks of redemption and salvation which will come from the house of David. David was from the tribe of Judah not Levi. Zechariah is clearly not talking about John here, but the promise of the Messiah. The one who will fulfill all of the Old Testament covenants. He is making it clear that John is not the Messiah but is the one who comes directly before the Messiah. Not until

verse 76 does he begin talking about John as the one who prepares the way as a prophet. And he tells us that his message will be one of salvation through the forgiveness of sins through the mercy of God.

Did you get that? **Yes, John is an important character in the Bible, and yes, he does some very cool things which we all acknowledge, but even before he was born, his entire existence was to shine the spotlight on Christ.** And with Zechariah we praise the Lord accordingly **vs.68-69** – “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David!” Amen. **We must be different from the world in the ways we unwaveringly stand for the truth and redirect the spotlight towards Christ.**

Now the second thing, and by far the most important thing that we need to see here today about John the Baptist is that... **The Teachings of John Prepare The Way For Salvation In Christ.** Look with me in **John 1:19-23.** John begins his ministry and immediately he's bombarded with questions like, “Who are you? Are you the Christ?” No. Elijah? No. The Prophet (Isaiah)? No. Then who? Who are you? He answers them, “I am the one who cries, make straight the way of the Lord. And this is the essential message of his ministry. The way must be prepared, made straight. But how? We will get to that in a minute.

First let's see how John's message is proclaimed. Two ways. Humility and Righteous indignation. Let's look at humility first. Look first at **John 1:24 – 34.** There are three reasons John is humbled. First, he has humility because Jesus is the Son of God. A phrase we see in almost all of the Gospels is this, “I am not worthy to tie his shoes.” John recognizes who Jesus is and understands that next to him he is not worthy to serve him in the most menial and lowly job he could think of. What was it that John saw in Jesus? God reveals to him that Jesus is the Son of God because he saw the dove descend on him from heaven. John knows that Jesus is the one who he has been preparing the way for, God in the flesh, the messiah, and next to him he is nothing. He is humbled before the Son of God.

Secondly, in **John 3:22-30** we see that John is humbled because Jesus is the bridegroom. John says that Jesus is clearly the Bridegroom, that is why the people, the bride, are going to him. John is merely the friend of the Bridegroom. John knows the the elect are not his bride, and that this is not his wedding! So he steps out of the spotlight to shine the light on the true bridegroom, Jesus. That is why John makes it clear in **vs.30** that Jesus must increase while he decreases. The spotlight isn't for us, it's for Him!

Thirdly, in **John 3:31-33** we see that John is humbled because Jesus is the truth of God. Whoever receives the testimony of Jesus

believes that God is true and that Jesus is the word and gives the spirit. You cannot believe in the truth of God without believing in Jesus, and lest we not forget, the wrath of God remains on you. John humbles himself because he is nothing compared to Jesus. He is the Son, He is the Bridegroom, he is the truth. John is humbled before Jesus as we should all be. **When we see the majesty of Christ compared to our sinful depravity, every knee should bow.**

The second way John's message is proclaimed is through his passion and righteous anger towards sin. Look with me at **Luke 3:1-6, 7-17.** Notice in **verse 7** how John addresses the crowds and the pharisees. He calls them a brood of vipers. Not a very seeker sensitive way to approach those who have showed up for church. He clearly had not learned from some of our modern day pastors on how to be encouraging all the time. He then asks, who told y'all that you were sinners in danger of hell? Surely it wasn't the pharisees or again, modern evangelist who don't even know what the worlds hell and sin are. And then before they can even answer he cuts them off and starts tearing into their heritage. He tells them don't even say that Abraham is your daddy. Apparently this was a common excuse. John's like Abraham Abraham blah blah blah. And then he reminds them of judgement. He tells them everyone tree (everyone) who doesn't repent and bear good fruit has not truly received justification and in the end will be cut off the tree of Israel and thrown into the fire.

This is his introduction. Basically, you snakes, who told you that you were sinners. Your father Abraham is nothing compared to the wrath of God which is coming for you. You are going to be cut off from the chosen people and thrown into hell! Some may say, well, that's a little harsh. That's a little overbearing don't you think. Hey how about you tone it down John.

My friend Mark, who is also Canaan's soccer coach, was in our service a couple of weeks ago. I was preaching on stewardship. On the way home I asked Canaan, how do you think Mark liked the service? He said, and I quote, “dad, you go hard in the paint. I'm amazed you don't scare off more visitors. If they stick around at least you know they are real because you don't pull punches.” I was like, okay. He was like, “yeah, if I were them I might be like, hey, can I get a refund on that offering.” I don't know if that is good or bad. Probably a little of both. But I can tell you one thing for sure, John went hard in the paint!

Why? Because he was protecting the holiness of God. He didn't think sin was something to be joked around about. He had a righteous hatred for sin and he wasn't afraid to talk about it. We shouldn't either. **The great holiness of God and the absolute horrors our our sin should motivate us towards truth.**

So the people ask, then what should we do about our sin? He says a basic message. John responds, “share, don't steal, don't make false accusations or bully people, and be content with what you have.” And then

he ends his message with this. I'm not the Christ, because I do not have the power to judge you. But he does. He will baptize the righteous with the Holy Spirit and the unrighteous with the fire of hell. He is about to separate the wheat and the chaff. He is about to show you his holiness doesn't tolerate sin. John had a righteous indignation.

Which brings us back to the reason for his message. To prepare people for the coming Messiah. We see this in the reason John preached; to call out people's sin, and the reason John baptized; for repentance of sin. You see, before we can accept Jesus we must recognize one vital and important thing, we are sinners.

You see, in Jesus' day the people had become complacent to sin and righteousness. They had started to become people like the ones in Noah's day where all the did all the time was evil. But they didn't see themselves as evil, they saw themselves as righteous because they were Israelites. Its kind of like people in our day here in the south. They think that because they said a prayer at VBS 30 years ago and had the pastor write a date in their Bible and then got baptized that they are all good. They can party, live life like a pagan, care nothing for the things of God and still call themselves a Christian. But you can't. And that's what John is there to remind them and us. If we don't recognize that we are all sinners in the hands of an angry God and humble ourselves in desperate repentance then there is no salvation for us. **John came to remind of us of our sin so that when Jesus came we would want him to save us.** We must hate sin and humble ourselves to be saved. In other words...**we must be different from the world in the ways we unwaveringly stand for the truth and redirect the spotlight towards Christ.**

Application

The application this morning is simple. Was the baptism of John from God or from man? We see this question asked in **Matthew 21:23-27, Mark 11:27-33, and Luke 20:1-8**. Because these passages are almost verbatim I will only read the passage in Mark. Jesus is doing miracles and the pharisees ask him, by who's authority do you do these. Basically, where does your power come from? Of course the answer is God and the Holy Spirit, of which Jesus is one and the same. But he doesn't tell them that because their hearts were not ready to accept it. So instead he asks them I will tell you if you can tell me if John's baptism was from God or man. They knew they couldn't say God because then Jesus would say, then why didn't you repent in baptism. But if they said man then the people would revolt. So they couldn't answer.

The reason we can answer that John's baptism was from God is the same reason we can answer where Jesus's power comes from. It's Jesus! It's all about Jesus. It's never been about John. Why? Because John is just a man blessed with being a part of the greatest story every

told. He exists to promote Jesus Christ. And guess what, we are no different, we exist to promote Jesus Christ. We are called just like John to prepare the way.

How, we prepare the way for others to come to Christ by being humble. No arrogance, no pride, only meekness. We come before others with a sense that we are sinners too and in need of the grace of God. But we also come with the truth. We come standing on the rock of the Gospel. We don't play it safe with the truth of the word. We tell it like it is. We must call people to repentance. We each one reach one. We humble ourselves to earn the right to tell them about Christ and when that time comes we call them to repentance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, John the Baptist was an outcast, a homeless man who ate bugs and dressed like a hobo, and yet God used him as a prophet to draw Israel to repentance. If God can use John the Baptist, he can use you. And he wants to use you, to point people to Christ. In humility and in righteous truth point people to Christ. **We must be different from the world in the ways we unwaveringly stand for the truth and redirect the spotlight towards Christ.**