

Sunday, December 14, 2014

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Scripture

John 3:22-30

²²After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. ²³John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized ²⁴ — John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. ²⁶They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease."

Devotional

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” Surely not the response John’s disciples were expecting. After all, the competition was winning. What about keeping up with the Joneses? What about climbing the ladder? What about staying at the top of your game, and taking care of number one? What a countercultural posture the Baptist models for us moderns. He recognizes his secondary place as the one “sent before,” and he’s happy about playing that supporting role: “this joy of mine has been made full.” What’s more, he’s determined to become less—to fade into the shadows as the spotlight comes into sharper focus on Jesus. For people in a world that largely measures success by the amount of attention one attracts—in whatever way—John’s stance is both challenging and at the same time stress-relieving . . . if we let it be. If we move over. If we relinquish center stage to God.

Prayer

Most gracious heavenly Father, when I am tempted to live my life out of determination to gain everything that I, and not you, have put on my life’s Christmas-wish list, please remind me that I, too, “can receive nothing, unless it has been given [me] from heaven,” and that I have already received the greatest heavenly gift of all in Jesus Christ, your son and my Savior, who lives in me through your Holy Spirit. Glory and praise to you, and to you alone.